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ESSAYS

ON THE

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Wm Greenfield

SECOND EDITION.

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN,
PATERNOSTER-ROW, LONDON;
MANNERS AND MILLER, AND ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE AND CO.
EDINBURGH.

1813.

J. M'Creery, Printer,
Black-Horse-Court, London.

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ESSAY I.

ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF TASTE.

WORKS of eloquence and poetry, when properly conducted, afford a most elegant and delightful, and not unfrequently also a highly profitable, entertainment. But it is not by the untutored that their happy effects will be fully experienced. Our natural *relish* or *taste* (which word we employ in the present essay to denote merely *our capacity to receive the pleasures* of such compositions, and of the fine arts in general) is susceptible of far greater improvement than may at first be supposed: and we shall endeavour to point out the circumstances on which that improvement depends.

Here we may first attend to the importance of making ourselves acquainted with productions of the highest excellence.

The ruder essays in the fine arts have attractions sufficient to gain the inexperienced. The picture on a sign-post must be miserably executed, if it does not give pleasure to him who has never seen a better painting. A peasant is delighted with an old-fashioned garden, where the walks are all disposed in straight lines, and the trees and hedges trimmed into regular figures. In the same manner, the wisest and most delicate of our forefathers, in the days when the more perfect compositions of antiquity were unknown, heard with pleasure the rough verse, and the coarse, unnatural stories of their minstrels.

Now when our attention has been long confined to inferior productions, we are not only contented with the inferior gratifications which they are capable of affording, but we even grow attached to them, and are disappointed and hurt when we do not meet with the same gratifications in more perfect compositions: for when once we are accustomed to any pleasure, however trifling, we do not easily bear to be deprived of it, and are sensibly disconcerted

when it is not found where our habits lead us to expect it. It was owing to this influence of habit, that, even after the works of the great authors of Greece and Rome were restored, men could not be brought all at once to forsake the absurdities of the Gothic productions. Ariosto, with all his genius, would have had fewer readers in his own age, if he had not retained (I do not say the romantic wildness, and the romantic manners, for these are charms which ought not to be abandoned; but if he had not retained) that familiar use of the marvellous, and that intricate manner of telling his bundle of stories, which, by taking away our solicitude, and distracting our attention, diminish greatly our interest in the fate of the characters,—a pleasure so much superior to what we can receive from those childish artifices.

It appears, then, that we are not likely to be well disposed for relishing first-rate compositions, if our attention has been previously confined to common productions. But we have moreover to observe, that a short or slight acquaintance will not be sufficient to open our

minds to all the charms in the higher specimens of any of the fine arts. This will be evident from the following important consideration.

Many of the most affecting circumstances in the objects of taste, require to have our attention particularly and habitually directed to them, before they produce any considerable impression.

For even when these circumstances are such that they cannot fail to be distinctly apprehended as soon as they are presented, yet many of them are apt to be considered too slightly by the untutored. Now there is a wide difference in point of effect, between simply perceiving an object by the senses, or simply conceiving it in the mind, and directing to it the whole force of our attention. How many things are daily and hourly perceived by us, and how many thoughts are continually passing through the mind, capable all of them to make the deepest impression, and yet actually leaving no trace behind, merely because we do not allow or accustom ourselves to dwell on them. There is scarcely any person, who, in reading Thom-

son's Seasons, will not find several beauties in external nature pointed out to him, which he may perfectly recollect to have seen, though not to have attended to before; but which, now that his attention is turned to them, he feels to be productive of the most delightful emotions. A common observer overlooks in a landscape a variety of charms, which strike at once the eye of a painter.

It is easy, then, to conceive, that they who have their minds directed to the more refined excellencies of eloquence and poetry, will be affected and delighted by what would otherwise pass unnoticed.

Hitherto we have supposed the affecting circumstances to be such as would be apprehended distinctly whenever they were presented. But in all the fine arts, the well-informed and experienced receive high delight from many things, which, until we are particularly trained to attend to them, are either wholly imperceptible, or, at least, very indistinctly and imperfectly perceived. This may happen either from their delicacy, or from their complicated nature.

It is wonderful how far even our external organs may be trained to a sensibility of the most delicate impressions. Blind persons, to whom the information derived from feeling and hearing is so peculiarly interesting, acquire in both of these senses a surprising acuteness. A sailor can with perfect certainty perceive land or a sail at a distance, where others, who have no defect in their sight, are unable to distinguish any thing. In like manner, experienced musicians and painters are touched *to the quick* by differences in musical tones, and by gradations of shade, which are completely undetected by common observers. And thus also in the language, in the allusions, in the transitions, in the sentiments, in the way of introducing the more affecting strokes, and in various other particulars, many delicate graces, which remain undiscovered by ordinary readers, will be felt with delight by those who have directed their attention to the refinements of composition.

But it is frequently also, from their complicated nature, that the affecting circumstances

in the fine arts require us to be trained in a particular manner, before they can be distinctly and fully apprehended. A concert of music, for example, confounds an inexperienced hearer; he is unable to separate the different parts, or even to distinguish the principal air, although it should be one which he is well acquainted with, and would have recognized at once if it had been played alone, or with a single accompaniment. By degrees, however, if he accustoms himself to hear a variety of parts, accompanying the principal air, and especially if he gives some application to the practice of music, he begins to distinguish the principal air from the accompaniments, and the accompaniments from each other; and it is only then that he has acquired the capacity of feeling what a concert is, or of receiving any thing like the true pleasure which it is capable of affording.

In like manner it cannot be supposed that, any literary composition will produce its full effect on every reader. On the contrary, while it gives the highest delight to one, it may appear insipid and tiresome, or even positively disagree-

able, to another; merely because he is not able to perceive the connexion between the different parts, to discover how they severally contribute to the general design, and to retain, as he proceeds, a steady view of what is past. Pindar says of his odes, that they are φωναντα συνετοισι, that they speak to the intelligent: and it must be acknowledged, that in some passages they are not so agreeable to a modern reader, from ignorance of the circumstances to which they allude, or from inability to discover the author's design, or the happiness of his transitions; whether this inability be always owing to a defect in the reader's intelligence, or may sometimes proceed from a real fault in the compositions themselves. But, whatever may be the case with these poems, there can be no doubt of the general fact, that he who possesses extensive information, a steady attention, a ready recollection, a quick apprehension, a lively imagination, and a sound judgment, in a word, he who along with extensive information has the powers of his understanding improved to the greatest perfection, will discern many beauties of the

highest kind, where no attractions will be felt by a person of inferior accomplishments.

The advantage of a cultivated understanding, and extensive information in the improvement of taste, will appear still more evident, if we attend to the influence of the association of ideas.

Without entering into a particular explanation of this last term, it is sufficient, at present, to observe in general, that a great part of what we feel from the objects of taste, in many instances by far the greatest part of what we feel, is not directly owing to the objects themselves, but to the train of ideas with which they are associated in our minds; a fact which we shall have occasion to consider more fully in the following essay, and which Mr. Alison, in his very ingenious Essays on Taste, has most beautifully and happily established, illustrated, and applied to many of the most interesting investigations in the science of criticism. Now the train of our ideas in any particular case depends in a great measure on our habitual occupations, studies, and pursuits. And it is mani-

fest, that they whose knowledge is not only enlarged and varied, but also (which is the most important effect of cultivating the intellectual powers) readily recalled by whatever is connected with it, will often be kindled to a glow of thought, by what makes but a feeble impression upon less informed or duller minds.

On the other hand it is to be remembered, that, from various causes, all men are liable to form associations which render them less fit either to discern, or to relish, the higher beauties of composition. The books which first awakened our imagination, however destitute they may be of any real excellence, cannot fail to be connected with delightful feelings which they might not have otherwise excited. In celebrated works, or such as have received the sanction of approved judges, the very defects are apt to become agreeable, not only from their connexion with real beauties, but also from being associated with our respect for the genius of the author, and for the judgment of his admirers. The same thing will naturally happen in compositions connected with the government or with

the religion which we revere, or with whatever else is interwoven in the idea of our country, and awakens our love and veneration. In such cases, disgusting or ludicrous circumstances may be connected with sentiments tending to counteract the effects which they would naturally produce, and which they actually do produce, on those who read the works without these previous impressions. Thus we acquire a partiality for inferior beauties, and even for defects in composition—a partiality which will, of course, render us less favourable to what would otherwise have affected us with the greatest delight. Again, by associations of an opposite kind, our aversion to the character, the opinions, or even the country of an author, may produce an aversion to the very beauties of his works. Now it is evident, that the remedy for these unfavourable associations is only to be found in the enlargement of our knowledge, and the improvement of our understanding.

But taste cannot be completely refined without great sensibility in the moral feelings. It

is by this sensibility alone, that we rise superior to the allurements of those authors who prostitute their talents to enslave us to the ignoble passions. It is by this sensibility alone, that we are awakened to the most exalted pleasures; all that flow from the contemplation of the sublimer virtues; all that flow from sympathy with the endearing "charities" of our nature; all that flow from the fervors of devotion, and the hopes of a happier world. He who does not feel as a good man feels, will be a stranger to the highest delights of eloquence and poetry.

Upon the whole, then, our taste will be improved, according as our moral sensibility and intellectual faculties are improved; according as our knowledge is extensive; according as we have become acquainted with first-rate compositions; according as we are disposed and accustomed to connect agreeable trains of thought with proper objects; according as we have learned to counteract unfavourable associations; and according as we have been trained to direct our full attention to the more affecting circum-

stances, and to apprehend them completely and dictinctly, even when they are too complicated or too delicate for common observers.

But although a man should have improved his taste to the utmost, it may afterward be corrupted by satiety. This will happen when his acquaintance with compositions of merit is not sufficiently extensive for the time which he devotes to them. Tired at last with too frequent repetition, he grows sick of what once delighted him, and flies to novelty for relief. In fact, the passive pleasures of taste, although they are, undoubtedly, our most elegant relaxations, cannot fail to pall upon us, if they are made the principal object of our pursuit. But we shall enjoy them most, if we employ the greater part of our time in the more active and interesting occupations of business or science.

It is sufficiently obvious, that the foregoing observations enable us to account for that diversity of tastes which has been so often remarked: and they likewise point out the principle upon which the preference between different tastes ought to be determined.

It has been sometimes said, that taste s dmit of no dispute; that every man is pleased as nature inclines him, so that every man's taste is equally natural: and that if the question is to be decided by numbers, those who take most delight in the ruder productions of the fine arts will have an undoubted preference.

But on the other hand the circumstances, which have been enumerated as conducive to the improvement of taste, will account, in a satisfactory manner, for the diversity which prevails, without having recourse to the supposition, that such a diversity would subsist, if all men possessed the same advantages. Accordingly, that taste is to be regarded as the most natural, and the best, which there is reason to think that all men would feel, if their faculties were improved to equal perfection, and if they were all placed in situations equally favourable. But the variations from this taste, which proceed from inferiority in moral sensibility or in the intellectual faculties, from limited knowledge, from accidental associations of ideas, from incapacity to apprehend the affecting cir-

cumstances, from weariness and satiety; all such variations are called with propriety unnatural and corrupt tastes.

It may still be asked, in what manner we are to ascertain the circumstances, which, independently of these accidental causes of variation, would be agreeable to those who possess the requisite accomplishments and advantages. If we have any means of ascertaining these circumstances, we have then what is called the standard of taste.

On this subject three opinions have been advanced. Sometimes nature is said to be the standard; sometimes we are directed to the general sentiments of mankind; and sometimes to the principles of philosophical criticism.

These assertions, in so far as they are intelligible, do not differ essentially from each other. For the principles of criticism are deduced from the study of human nature, and therefore it may be said that they establish nature for the standard, although it is but a vague and inaccurate expression. Again, these principles are, or ought to be, only the expressions of the general

sentiments of mankind, that is to say, of the sentiments in which all men agree, when they are not influenced by accidental causes of variation, and have their faculties improved to the greatest perfection. Hence these principles establish the standard in the general sentiments of mankind, by which we are to understand (as they who hold this language have always explained themselves), the general sentiments of the cultivated and well-informed.

It is to be observed, however, that the principles of criticism, so far as they go, exhibit a standard which may at all times be readily consulted; and this is more than we can say of nature, or of the general sentiments of any part of mankind. But the establishment of these principles is an arduous work, where many errors mingle themselves with the investigations of the ablest men, and where, as in every other department of philosophy, we must only look for an approximation to what we are never destined in our present state completely to attain.

ESSAY II.

ON THE IMAGINATION, AND ON THE ASSOCIATION OF IDEAS.

THE great power of composition in raising either our pleasing or painful emotions arises from the imagination, and from the association of ideas. These two subjects are so intimately connected, that it will be proper, at least for our purpose, to consider them together. Accordingly, after stating what parts of the human constitution are to be understood by these terms, we shall first consider their effect in raising the emotions; and, secondly, how this effect may be excited and regulated in composition.

Every moment that we are awake, we experience the state of mind which is produced by the impression of external objects; we experience the sensations of colour, odour, sound, and so forth; and also the perception of the

objects, as possessing different qualities, and existing independently of our feelings. But, farther; on numberless occasions, as when we dream, or when we reflect on any thing which has deeply affected us, we find that, even although the external objects are absent, we are in a state similar to that which is produced by their actual presence. It is true, that while we are awake, the state of our mind, when the objects are absent, is not so vivid;—at least in so far as it resembles sensation and perception it is not so vivid,—as when the objects themselves affect our organs of sensation. For this difference, however, there is an obvious reason; namely, that the various surrounding objects distract our attention, and also remind us continually, that what we reflect upon is not really before us. But in dreaming our state of mind seems to be perfectly the same, as if the objects which are represented were actually present. Sometimes in dreaming our state of mind is even more vivid; not only because we are removed from the influence of external objects, but frequently also because our thoughts

are then confined to a smaller range of objects than when we are awake. But however this may be, one thing every person knows, that in reflecting upon any object which he has formerly observed, he is brought into a state of mind similar to that which was produced by the actual presence of the object itself.

But there is a great deal more than this. We are able in thought to combine at pleasure the various qualities which we have observed in real objects, and thus to exhibit to ourselves innumerable objects which we never observed, and even which never existed. We can easily figure the dreams of the ancient astronomers, the crystalline spheres of Heaven revolving in harmonious concert. We can easily conceive the material representations which have been given of the spiritual world, and people the ethereal regions with a race of immortal beings in the human form, but far more noble and beautiful,

> Sailing with supreme dominion
> Through the azure deep of air.——Gray.

Now when our attention is turned to these combinations, just as in the case where we reflect

on absent objects which we have formerly observed, we are conscious of a state of mind *similar* to that which would be produced, if we saw and believed the objects themselves to be present. And we give the name of the imagination to that part of our constitution, which produces a state of mind similar to the sensations and perceptions that would be produced by the presence of any object, whether the object be real or not.

But the mind cannot confine itself to any one object. On the contrary, whatever is presented to us, whether by the senses, by the imagination, or by the understanding, instantly suggests some other object to which it is related; this last suggests a third, and so on; and thus, at least while we are awake, we are always conscious of a train of thought going forward, and often with astonishing rapidity. It will proceed even without any exertion upon our part; nor does it appear to be ever interrupted, except when we fall into a state of utter insensibility, as in the case perhaps of a profound sleep; or when conversation, or reading, or some external

object, happens to introduce a foreign thought for the commencement of a new series.

The association of ideas is the name given to this part of our constitution, which, by a sort of fermentation, as Dr. Reid has well expressed it, is always exciting a train of thoughts in consequence of every object which engages the attention.

We come now to consider the effect of the imagination, and of the association of ideas, in raising the emotions.

As imagination is a state of mind similar to perception, it will not be thought surprising, that the objects which it contemplates should have an influence similar to that of present objects, and likewise raise our emotions, at least in some degree. That this is actually the case will be readily acknowledged. Every hour we are conscious of emotions excited by the imagination, without the intervention of external objects. The scenes through which we have passed, the friends with whom we have conversed, the dangers to which we have been exposed, the happiness which we have enjoyed or expect to

enjoy, the evils which we have suffered, or are apprehensive of suffering; these and other objects are continually occurring to the imagination, and affecting us, at least in some degree, with the same pain or pleasure, which would have been produced by their actual presence.

Our emotions are raised even by those objects of the imagination, which we know to be purely imaginary, and never seriously believed to have any existence. The reader, probably, has no belief in ghosts and enchantments; yet he will feel some degree of horror when his imagination is awakened by the tales

> Of the death-bed call
> To him who robb'd the widow, and devour'd
> The orphan's portion; of unquiet souls
> Risen from the grave to ease the heavy guilt
> Of deeds in life conceal'd; of shapes that walk
> At dead of night, and clank their chains, and wave
> The torch of Hell around the murd'rer's bed.*

But there is a curious fact, which we must now take notice of, as it is of the greatest importance to be studied by composers; and that is, the

* Akenside's Pleasures of the Imagination, l. i. v. 256.

strength or liveliness of the emotions which are frequently raised by the imagination.

It does not appear surprising, that some faint emotions should be raised; and in many cases no doubt they are extremely faint. But in many cases also they are extremely vivid, and sometimes even more vivid than those of which we are conscious in real life. I do not say that this is always the case, but only that it frequently happens: and any one may be convinced of the truth of the assertion, by a little attention to his own experience.

For instance; however susceptible any one may be of the beauties of nature, yet he has no doubt frequently viewed a fine landscape with great indifference. But when the same, or even a much inferior one, has occurred to his imagination, and especially if it has been presented in a poetical description, he may have felt as high, or perhaps a higher degree of pleasure, than he ever received from any landscape which was actually before his eyes. So, likewise, the perusal, or the recollection of a well-told pathetic story, even when we are convinced that it is

entirely fictitious, will often raise our pity more powerfully than still greater distress which we actually behold.

This curious fact, which deserves to be carefully considered by all who study the principles of composition, appears to be explained by the following observations.

We may observe, in the first place, how much depends on the selection of circumstances. In real life our attention is distracted by the variety of objects, which all equally affect our senses, but which produce various and contrary effects on the mind. In the same manner, also, every individual object has a variety of qualities or circumstances, which raise emotions of different and perhaps opposite natures.

Now when any object or any scene is presented to the imagination, although it may not appear so distinct or so lively as it does to the eye, yet it may be presented in that point of view, which will conduce in the highest degree to some particular effect; all the qualities and circumstances which are favourable to the effect being forced on our attention, while such as are

unfavourable or indifferent are concealed and overlooked. The finest landscape is interspersed with objects which either have no beauty, or are positively disagreeable. But these are neglected by the poet, who selects only what is sublime, picturesque, or beautiful, and thus by his description rouses the imagination to contemplate a scene, not so distinct or lively, but more conducive to his particular purpose than what is exhibited by nature.

Or to take an instance of a different kind: in the mortality of a plague on shipboard, how many things would occur to overwhelm the spectator with terror and disgust, as well as to melt him with the kindlier sympathies of pity! But in Thomson's description of a scene of this kind on the coast of Carthagena, that engaging poet has omitted every loathsome circumstance, and touched the terrible but with a gentle though masterly hand, while he holds up to view the particulars which are calculated to awaken our tenderest compassion.

> You, gallant Vernon, saw
> The miserable scene; you pitying saw
> To infant weakness sunk the warrior's arm;

> Saw the deep-racking pang, the ghastly form,
> The lip pale quiv'ring, and the beamless eye
> No more with ardour bright: you heard the groans
> Of agonizing ships from shore to shore;
> Heard nightly plung'd amid the sullen waves
> The frequent corse.

We are next to observe, that as in real life we frequently see too much, so, on the other hand, we frequently see too little, to raise a particular emotion to its greatest height. Thus in the distresses of our fellow-creatures, it is but rarely that we are witnesses of the whole series of calamitous events, and that only at intervals both of time and place. It is but seldom that we are acquainted with the character of the sufferer, that we know how much he has lost, his sensibility to his losses, and the patience and fortitude with which he endures his afflictions. On the other hand, in those distressful scenes which we form in our imagination, or which are represented to us by the novelist or dramatic poet, the whole story is brought at once before us, and all the pathetic circumstances, which are unknown or overlooked in real life, may be exhibited in their full force.

We have to add, in the next place, that the qualities which are favourable to a particular effect appear frequently higher to the imagination than they are in reality. Thus when we meet with a beautiful woman whom we admired, but whom we have not seen for a considerable time, we are apt to suppose that she looks worse than formerly, merely because we had conceived too high an idea of her in our absence. Hence too we are often disappointed, when we are made acquainted with any person, whom we have heard greatly praised before we saw him. From the same cause, and from that which was first mentioned, that objects frequently appear to the imagination free from their imperfections, we are apt to entertain an extravagant veneration for the sages and heroes of remote antiquity. To these causes also we are to ascribe the discontent, which so many people show for the comforts and pleasures which are in their possession, and their partiality for absent places, and absent persons, and in general for every object of desire, which it is not in their power to obtain at the time.

But the imagination, in numberless instances, goes far beyond the mere representation of objects freed from their imperfections, or with their excellencies improved. For we are next to remember, that it combines all the excellencies which subsist in any particular species, and thus forms an imaginary creature far superior to any thing which we ever beheld. Just as Zeuxis, the celebrated Grecian painter (and I presume that other painters have followed a similar method), by uniting in one figure the beauties which he had observed in different women, produced a Helen incomparably more beautiful than any of them. In this manner it is easy to see how much the imagination may improve on nature in every department; how it may conceive a race of mortals far more amiable and respectable than the best and most accomplished of human creatures; and scenes more awful, more sublime, more beautiful, or more gay, than any which now exist upon earth. Thus we are transported into the regions of the marvellous, where the imagination wanders without control.

We are farther to observe, that without going beyond what actually exists, many of the most affecting objects of nature are either too vast or too minute, to be perceived sufficiently by the senses; while, at the same time, when the imagination is roused, it is able to conceive them with great distinctness. Thus in the motions of the heavenly bodies, what we see with our eyes is nothing compared to the view which rises in the mind at particular times. The diurnal revolution, which is incomparably the most rapid of all the apparent movements in the heavens, is to the sight a very slow one. Of the apparent movements of the moon and planets among the fixed stars, that of the moon is by far the quickest: and yet we can scarcely discern in less than an hour that she has approached nearer to any of the stars. And with regard to the planets, a day, and frequently a week or more, must elapse before we are sensible of any change. But how different is the vision which rises in the imagination, when we are properly awakened to conceive the revolutions of those mighty globes, as they roll with

astonishing rapidity through the depths of space! when we are awakened, for instance, by the following address of Milton, though it is not agreeable to the system which is now universally adopted:

> Thou, Sun, of this great world both eye and soul,
> Acknowledge Him thy greater, sound his praise
> In thy eternal course, both when thou climb'st,
> And when high noon hast gain'd, and when thou fall'st.
> Moon, that now meet'st the orient Sun, now fliest
> With the fix'd stars, fix'd in their orb that flies;
> And, ye five other wand'ring fires, that move
> In mystic dance, not without song; resound
> His praise, who out of darkness call'd up light*.

We may next observe, that in real life the most affecting objects may be presented to us at a time when we are not disposed to receive the proper impression. Our attention may be distracted by objects of a very different nature; or we may be engaged by interesting reflections of our own; or we may be under the influence of passions, counteracting the effect which the scene before us would otherwise have produced. A man who is looking forward to a party of

* Paradise Lost, b. 5. v. 171.

pleasure, or ruminating on a profitable bargain, is not in a frame to be easily subdued by objects of pity, or easily elevated to sublime conceptions. We are likewise to remember, that without any apparent cause, our sensibility varies. Objects which at one time would have warmed and filled our heart, we behold at another with indifference. Thus it is easy to conceive, that the mere imagination of an object, at a time when we are more particularly disposed to be affected by it, may produce an emotion incomparably greater than would otherwise be felt from its actual presence.

Lastly; both the vivacity and the nature of the emotion produced by any object depend on the particular train of thought which it excites. Let us suppose, for instance, two different persons viewing a beautiful and extensive vernal prospect. Let us likewise suppose, that from their particular habits, they are led by this view to different reflections: that one of them looks forward only to the wealth, which will arise to the possessors from the good crops,

and the rents which the proprietors ought to receive for fields so well enclosed, and in such excellent condition; while the other is awakened to the affecting and exalted contemplations which we find in Buchanan's ode, the Calendæ Majæ;—the beauty and happiness of the creation at the return of spring, the perpetual spring which reigned in the primeval ages before the degeneracy of man, the future restoration of nature to its original glory, and the felicity of the virtuous in that better state. It is evident, that the one of these observers will not be sensible of the sublime emotions, which the very same view has kindled in the other. And we can easily see, that the imagination of an object, if attended with the proper train of thought, may affect us in a particular way far more powerfully than its actual presence would have done, if our thoughts had been turned into a different channel.

These observations on the vivacity of the emotions produced by the imagination suggest the general principles, which a composer ought

to keep in view for exciting and regulating its influence according to his particular purpose.

He ought, in the first place, to be extremely careful in selecting and bringing forward the circumstances which are conducive to his purpose, and concealing as much as may be those which are unfavourable, or even superfluous.

This rule is very apt to be overlooked by an author of a fertile imagination. A multitude of brilliant ideas rise before him in the glow of composition, and he is unwilling to part with any of them, even although they should have the effect to draw off the reader's attention from the principal objects, and thus to deaden the great impression. Nor does the ardour of genius easily submit either to select with care, or even to wait with patience, and to seek with industry for the most favourable and affecting ideas.

It may be said, that such a mode of composing would be hurtful to the exertions of genius; and that it is better for a composition to have many and even gross faults, than to be

altogether faultless, but at the same time destitute of those high excellencies, which have charmed the world in Shakspeare and Homer.

This assertion I am far from disputing, and have no doubt, that an author ought to give as full scope as possible to his fancy in the time of composition, and even to mark down all his thoughts, if they appear to have any merit, although he should suspect that he may afterwards find cause to reject them. But when the glow of composition has subsided, let him calmly revise his work, and prune it not only of what is unfavourable to the emotions which he wishes to communicate, but even of what is indifferent. Horace, whose good sense is so well known, laments the hastiness of the authors in his own country; affirms that Italy would not have been more renowned for virtue and arms than for literature, if they had not been impatient of the labour and delay requisite for polishing; and calls on the Pisoes to censure the poems, which had not been corrected with much time and much blotting, and polished

again and again, *ad unguem*, with scrupulousness.

> Nec virtute foret, clarisve potentius armis
> Quam lingua Latium, si non offenderet unum
> Quemque poetarum limæ labor et mora. Vos, O
> Pompilius sanguis, carmen reprehendite, quod non
> Multa dies et multa litura coërcuit, atque
> Perfectum decies non castigavit ad unguem.*

It is evident then in what manner a patient selection of circumstances may be rendered compatible with the greatest ardour of genius, and the highest excellencies of composition. The great care of this selection ought to be, not in the time of composing, but both before and after; that is to say, when the author forms, or at least when he corrects his plan, and above all in the revisal of what he has finished. There can be no doubt, that in this manner both Homer and Shakspeare would have rendered their performances finer throughout, and even heightened the effect of those

* De Arte Poetica, v. 289.

passages, which in themselves require no amendment.

The author is also to remember, in the second place, that a great impression is not to be expected, unless he be careful to prepare the reader. It has been observed, that the emotion produced by the sight of an external object is often feeble, compared with the effect of the same object when represented to the imagination,—because in real life we are often distracted by objects of a different nature, or engaged with thoughts of our own, or under the influence of unfavourable passions. An author therefore must employ all his skill, to direct our attention to such a train of thoughts, and to awaken us to such emotions, as may best dispose us for the impression to be made. If he is to strike us with terror, he must turn us aside from what is cheerful or enlivening; bring us gradually not only to a serious, but a melancholy frame; and likewise throw out previous hints to alarm us. If he is to melt us into pity, he must endeavour in the first place to interest us

in the fate of the character, to render him the object of our esteem and love, and to impress us with a high idea of the happiness from which he is to fall. Circumstances which would produce the most powerful effect, if skilfully prepared and introduced, will prove extremely feeble, or perhaps entirely abortive, sometimes even ridiculous, in the management of an ordinary or a careless composer. Every one, who has witnessed the representation of Venice Preserved, may recollect a circumstance, which shows how much may be done by a proper preparation. I allude to the sudden alarm, which seizes the audience in the parting scene between Jaffier and Belvidera, when the bell gives the first toll for the execution of the conspirators. The effect of the bell would have been little or nothing, if it had been heard before this affecting interview begins. It is from the trembling sensibility to which we are previously subdued, that the signal for the execution shakes us to the very heart.

But although an author ought to be extremely careful to select and bring forward the important circumstances, and to prepare for their introduction where it is necessary; yet it is not to be understood, that he ought always to enter into a minute detail. On the contrary, it may often have a much greater effect, not to circumscribe the reader's imagination by painting to him every feature, but rather to give hints from which he may figure the object or the scene to himself: for the imagination when sufficiently roused is capable of conceiving them far more awful, sublime, beautiful, or affecting, than it is possible for words to describe, or for the pencil to delineate. We would therefore suggest as the third general principle, that wherever it may be supposed that the reader is sufficiently roused to gather from hints enough to form a picture to himself; there it will be advisable, only to set his imagination to work by means of such hints as may lead him to the proper view of the subject.

How finely is this remark exemplified in the representation, which our great poet has given of Eve in Paradise!

> Grace was in all her steps, Heav'n in her eye,
> In ev'ry gesture dignity and love*.

Or to take an instance of a very different nature, in his view of the infernal regions, it may be observed how often we have nothing more than hints for figuring to ourselves every thing that is most horrible.

> Roving on
> In confus'd march forlorn, th' advent'rous bands
> With shudd'ring horror pale and eyes aghast,
> View'd first their lamentable lot, and found
> No rest; through many a dark and dreary vale
> They pass'd, and many a region dolorous,
> O'er many a fiery, many a frozen Alp,
> Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens, and shades of Death,
> A universe of Death . . . .
> . . . . worse
> Than fables yet have feign'd or fear conceiv'd†.

Painters also adopt frequently the same plan of rousing the imagination by hints. In the

* Paradise Lost, viii. † Paradise Lost, ii.

celebrated picture of Achilles bewailing the death of Patroclus, we do not see the face of Achilles, although it was the idea of his anguish that the painter wished to convey. Achilles is represented covering his face with his hand; and it is from this circumstance, and from the manner in which he seems to grasp his forehead, that we figure to ourselves more than it was possible to paint.

It may not, however, be easy to determine in particular cases, whether the reader may be supposed to be sufficiently prepared, so that the hints which are given may serve both to keep up the fire of his imagination, and to present a sufficient outline, which he will readily of himself fill up in the manner we could wish. Where this does not happen, the attempt must prove abortive, and the composition be most feeble in the very place, where the author designed it to have the strongest effect.

It ought on the other hand to be carefully remarked, that every great or interesting object, instead of being represented by general hints,

ought in some respects to be particularly and even minutely described, so that it may stand forward in our minds as a distinct individual, to be dressed up to our own fancy in other respects from the general hints which the author suggests to rouse our imagination. This is the practice of the great poet, from whom the instances are taken. He had already described Eve very particularly in several respects, before the admirable representation which has just been quoted. He had likewise given a view sufficiently minute, perhaps in some things too minute, of the infernal regions and the state of the rebellious angels, before he completed the whole with the general expressions of horror. Homer from the distinct account which he gives of several circumstances in the manner, in the person, and even in the dress of his different heroes, enables his readers to conceive each of them as a separate individual; and what is left to the imagination to supply, it supplies the better from the assistance which it has already received to form a great part of the picture.

In the last place, an author should be particularly careful to direct us to the proper train of thoughts, and not allow us to be diverted by such as are either inconsistent with or foreign to his design. We have seen already, that the same object will produce very different emotions, according to the thoughts with which it happens to be associated; that an object, which when it excites one train of thoughts warms us with the sublimest emotions, will at another time appear with no charms, and be viewed with indifference.

It is not necessary, however, that all the thoughts to be suggested should be stated at length. On the contrary, as the author, in his description of the most affecting objects, should frequently leave much for the imagination to paint to itself, so here likewise he should observe the same discretion, and rather be content with directing our thoughts to a particular channel, than attempt to state precisely every idea that occurs to himself. Such a mode of composition, however proper on some occasions, when we are endeavouring to initiate a scholar in the

rudiments of a science, is extremely tiresome, and altogether inconsistent with the rapidity of the mind, when it is roused by any powerful emotion.

These general principles will be more fully illustrated in treating of the different sources of pleasure.

ESSAY III.

ON THE SUBLIME.

NO subject has been treated more vaguely than the sublime; as will appear from the accounts which have been given by authors of eminence, who wrote professedly to explain it.

To begin with Longinus: "What is sublime," says that agreeable writer, "does not lead the "hearers to persuasion, but to ecstasy; and "every where the wonderful, by the astonish-"ment which it produces, surpasses the per-"suasive and the graceful; since it is for "the most part in our power to resist the "persuasive: but the sublime, carrying with "it irresistible power and violence, subdues

" every hearer."* Again he says, that " our
" mind is raised by the true sublime, and
" receiving a certain proud elevation, re-
" joices and glories, as if it had actually
" produced what it heard."† Now these
accounts are far from pointing out any precise
characters by which the sublime may be distinguished. Besides, they exclude, what have
been universally regarded as sublime, the objects which raise our veneration; for veneration
is an humbling, not a proud or elevating
emotion.

Lord Kames, in the fourth chapter of his
Elements of Criticism, informs us, that every
thing which is great in size affects the mind
with a certain emotion, which he calls the
emotion of grandeur; and that every thing

* Ὀυ γαρ ἐις πειθω τους ἀκροωμενους, ἀλλ᾽ ἐις ἐκστασιν ἀγει τα ὑπερφυα· παντη δε γε συν ἐκπληξει του πιθανου και του προς χαριν ἀει κρατει το θαυμασιον· ἐιγε το μεν πιθανον, ὡς τα πολλα, ἐφ᾽ ἡμιν· ταυτα δε, δυναστειαν και βιαν ἀμαχον προσφεροντα, παντος ἐπανω του ἀκροωμενου καθισταται. Περι Ὑψους. §. 1.

† Ὑπο τ᾽ αληθους ὑψους ἐπαιρεται τε ἡμων ἡ ψυχη, και γαυρον τι ἀναστημα λαμβανουσα, πληρουται χαρας και μεγαλαυχιας, ὡς ἀυτη γεννασασα ὁπερ ἠκουσεν. Ibid. §. 7.

which is elevated in situation produces what he calls the emotion of sublimity, which is similar, but not exactly the same with the former. "These emotions," he says, "are "clearly distinguishable, not only in the in-"ternal feeling, but even in their external "expressions. A great object (these are his "words) makes the spectator endeavour to "enlarge his bulk; which is remarkable in "plain people, who give way to nature with-"out reserve; in describing a great object "they naturally expand themselves, by draw-"ing in air with all their force. An elevated "object produces a different expression; it "makes the spectator stretch upwards, and "stands a-tiptoe." He observes still farther, that no object is termed grand or sublime, unless, together with its size or its elevation, it be possessed of the qualities which contribute to beauty, such as regularity, proportion, order, or colour. He even asserts, that according to the number of such qualities combined with magnitude or elevation, the object is more or less grand or sublime: though he acknowledges

that the perfection of these beautiful qualities is less requisite in great, elevated, or distant objects, than in those which are small or near. Now he adds, that every emotion, from whatever cause it proceeds, which resembles the emotion produced by grandeur or elevation, is called by the same name. Hence he accounts for courage, magnanimity, generosity, and whatever else is called sublime, being all ranked in the same class, the emotions which they produce resembling what we feel at the sight of great or elevated objects.

These observations are more vague and unsatisfactory than we should have expected in a philosophical discussion, and especially from an author of so great acuteness, who has thrown light on very difficult subjects. For surely it is not obvious at first sight, that there is any thing in common between two species of objects so very different, as the ocean or the sky on the one hand, and on the other hand Cæsar's courage or Cato's magnanimity; nor do we readily discover what is

the resemblance between the emotions which they produce.

Dr. Gerard, in the second section of his Essay on Taste, agrees with Lord Kames, in considering the emotion produced by objects of great dimensions as the standard of the sublime; though he does not insist, like his lordship, that they should be adorned with any of the beautiful qualities, but only that they should "possess quantity, or amplitude, and sim-"plicity in conjunction." And he endeavours in the following manner to account for the resemblance, which he supposes between such an emotion and those which are produced by the consideration of the nobler passions, as heroism, magnanimity, or patriotism. In forming the idea of any passion, he says, "we "run over in thought the objects about "which it is employed, the things by which "it is produced, the effects by which it dis-"covers itself; and as these always enter into "our conception of the passion, and are often "connected with quantity, they naturally render "the passion sublime. What wonder, then,"

he adds, "that we esteem heroism grand, "when, in order to imagine it, we suppose a "mighty conqueror, in opposition to the most "formidable dangers, acquiring power over "multitudes of nations, subjecting to his do-"minions wide-extended countries, and pur-"chasing renown which reaches to the ex-"tremities of the world, and shall continue "through all the ages of futurity."

Now here we may ask, if the hero's superiority to indolence, pleasure, and security, and his contempt of hardships, danger, death, and ruin, are not sublime objects in themselves, independently of any consideration of the numbers whom he has subdued, the wideness of his dominion, or the extent and duration of his fame. I apprehend, that those heroic virtues, exerted within the narrow bounds of a single city, and even exerted without success and without being known to the world, would be considered as far more sublime than the history of a man who had travelled through all the countries of the earth where he could travel without danger, and whose name was known every where, and

would be perpetuated to posterity as an accurate geographer or calculator in astronomy.

Our author, however, has also another way of explaining how the heroic virtues belong to the sublime; for he says, that such an excellence of character "excites wonder and astonishment, "the same emotion which is produced by "amplitude." But here it may be observed, that every object which is new or extraordinary of its kind, a woman of very uncommon beauty, a hag of very uncommon ugliness, all excite our wonder and astonishment. Yet surely our wonder and astonishment at beauty are very different from our wonder and astonishment at ugliness; nor does the state of mind produced by either of these objects resemble that which is produced by amplitude, or any other emotion which is called sublime.

Dr. Gerard, indeed, has limited his account of the emotion of sublimity, and limited it too much, by saying after Longinus, that the soul when affected by it "feels a noble pride, and "entertains a lofty conception of its own ca-"pacity." For, as we have already observed,

veneration is an humbling, not a proud emotion; and so too is our admiration of the omnipotence displayed in the works of nature: yet both of these emotions are universally acknowledged to be sublime.

Neither does the observation appear to be just, that all sublime emotions agree in composing the soul to a "solemn sedateness;" for this is not very expressive of our state of mind, when we look at the ocean in a storm, or admire an instance of extraordinary generosity.

Mr. Burke, in his philosophical Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful, has considered the subject in a very different light from the writers already mentioned, and explained and defended his theory with great ingenuity and liveliness. "Whatever," he says, "is fitted in any sort to "excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is "to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or "is conversant about terrible objects, or ope-"rates in any manner analogous to terror, is a "source of the sublime."* Here, indeed, we

* Part i. §. 7.

might suppose, that the author is mentioning only one of its sources; but we find, when we proceed, that the definition is considered as universal; nor does he even avail himself of the vague expression, "whatever operates in a man-"ner analogous to terror," to avoid the difficulty of reducing all sublime objects within its compass. On the contrary, after enumerating the different kinds of them, he endeavours to show, that they are all such as either raise terror directly, or else such as produce the same state of body which terror produces, and consequently raise some degree of that passion in the mind. For, both in the sublime and beautiful, he proceeds on this principle, that as every passion of the mind produces a certain state of body, so on the other hand when the state of body corresponding to any passion is produced, by whatever cause, it will always be attended with some degree of the particular passion. Mr. Burke endeavoured to bring his principle even to the test of experiment; for he says, "he has often "observed, that on mimicking the looks of "angry, or placid, or frighted, or daring men,

" he has involuntarily found his mind turned to
" that passion the appearance of which he en-
" deavoured to imitate; and he is convinced
" that it is hard to avoid it, though one strove
" to separate the passion from its correspond-
" ent gesture."*

Whatever truth there may be in this principle, still we cannot admit the general theory, were it only for this one consideration, that we find objects which are terrible in the highest degree, but which yet are destitute of all pretensions to sublimity. Such, for instance, are a mortal wound, a coffin, a rack, a gibbet. We must, therefore, suppose the terrible to be distinct from the sublime, however frequently these two characters may be united, or heighten each other's effect.

The most plausible theory appears to be that which is suggested by Dr. Blair at the conclusion of his Lecture on Sublimity in Objects. His words are: " Mighty force or
" power, whether accompanied with terror or

* Part iv. §. 4.

“ not, whether employed in alarming or pro-
“ tecting us, has a better title than any thing
“ that has been mentioned, to be the funda-
“ mental quality of the sublime.” Agreeably to the opinion of this judicious and eloquent author, I would state in general, that *objects are sublime, according as they exhibit or suggest extraordinary power.*

The truth of the theory will be more evident, when we take a survey of the different qualities which are regarded as sublime, and consider the emotions which they raise. We shall afterwards endeavour to state the principles which an author ought to have in view, when he would affect his readers with these delightful emotions.

Great power is universally acknowledged to be sublime; whether it be that which is exerted by living agents on external objects; or whether it be the force with which bodies act upon each other; or whether it be the mental energy of intellectual beings. In all these cases, the contemplation of great power is productive of a vivid and delightful admiration. In the two

former cases, the admiration is always accompanied with terror. For even when we have no apprehension of danger to ourselves, and even when the power is employed in acts of utility or of kindness, still some degree of awe will be raised from the imagination of the dreadful evils which it is capable of inflicting. In the contemplation of mental energy there are two cases; the consciousness of our own force of mind, and the conception of what is exerted by others. In the former case we are sensible of that elevating pride, which Longinus regarded as so characteristic of the sublime: and in the latter case, according as we suppose ourselves capable of the same exertion or not, our admiration is mingled with elevating pride, or humbling veneration.

Let us now consider how far extraordinary power is exhibited or suggested in the other sublime qualities.

In external objects, the most obvious of these qualities is magnitude; such magnitude as we observe in lofty and spacious buildings, wide

rivers, extended plains, mountains, precipices, the ocean, and the firmament. When our attention is directed to this quality, we are always conscious of a very lively emotion, an emotion so remarkable, that, as we have observed, some philosophers have fixed upon it as the standard of the sublime. Now the extraordinary power which must have been employed in the production of such an object, and the extraordinary force with which it would act upon other bodies, are the only things which are naturally and directly suggested, we may almost say exhibited, by its magnitude singly. And hence arises the principle, that the sublimity is the greater according as there is the greater simplicity or uniformity of appearance. For there is no quality whatever, at least in bodies at rest, which suggests, so directly as magnitude does, the idea of power. The other qualities suggest to us different ideas, such as design, wisdom, goodness, convenience, pleasure, which divert our attention, and soften the effect of the simple idea of power.

That principle, however, is to be understood

with a limitation. For although, when other things are the same, the uniform object is naturally more sublime than the variegated; yet if the latter happens to suggest the idea of greater power than the former, it will of course be felt proportionably more sublime. Without this limitation, we cannot, for instance, admit Mr. Burke's observation, that the sky when uniform in its appearance is grander than when it is bespangled with the stars. For when these spangles suggest what is taught by astronomy, that they are so many suns arranged at immeasurable distances through the depths of space, diffusing light and heat to their different systems of revolving worlds, then we must acknowledge, that of all material objects the starry heavens are by far the sublimest, which nature has yet displayed to the admiration of mortals.

Thus both the principle itself, and the limitation with which it ought to be understood, correspond perfectly with the general theory, that objects are sublime, according as they exhibit or suggest extraordinary power.

The theory also accounts for an observation, which, although it be inconsistent with Mr. Burke's notions, will yet be generally acknowledged. When we look down from the top of a precipice, it appears more dreadful, but less sublime, than when we stand below and look upwards. In this latter case, the height of the object is greatly magnified by optical deception; but moreover we are strongly impressed with the idea of the mighty power, which reared so enormous a mass to such a height, still more than with the idea of the vast force with which it threatens to fall. In the former case we are chiefly struck with the imagination of our inevitable and dreadful destruction, if by any accident we slipped from our station, a destruction which does not involve any idea of power.*

* Upon this paragraph, which is precisely the same as in the first Edition, the author was much edified with the following animadversion. "He is peculiarly unfortunate," says the British Critic, "in dwelling upon the sublime "effect of looking down a precipice, instead of looking up "to an equal height, as an illustration of his doctrine, "which is so direct a proof of the theory that resolves "sublimity into terror." British Critic for June, 1810.

The difference between the two cases is strongly marked in Mr. Jefferson's description of the famous natural bridge of rocks in Virginia, quoted by the Marquis de Chastellux in his Travels in North America. The height of the bridge is 270 feet, according to some measurements, but according to others only 205. The fissure is about 45 feet wide at the bottom, and 90 at the top. The bridge is about 60 feet in the middle, but more at the ends. "Though "the sides of the bridge," says Mr. Jefferson, "are provided in some parts with a parapet of "fixed rocks, yet few men have resolution "to walk to them and look over into the abyss. "You involuntarily fall on your hands and "feet, creep to the parapet, and look over "it. Looking down from this height about a "minute gave me a violent head-ache. If the "view from the top be painful and intolerable, "that from below is delightful in the extreme. "It is impossible for the emotions arising from "the sublime to be felt beyond what they are "here, on the sight of so beautiful an arch, so

" elevated, so light, springing up as it were to
" Heaven. The rapture of the spectator is
" really indescribable."

The theory also accords with another principle which is universally adopted; that a rugged and broken surface adds to the sublimity of an object of vast dimensions; as when the side of a mountain, instead of being covered with a smooth turf, and varying by gentle curvatures, has its rocks projecting in shelves and angles. For such an appearance irresistibly leads our imaginations to the violent convulsions of nature by which it was produced.

It is true, that ruggedness frequently appears without any symptoms of violence; as in rocks of moderate dimensions, or in ruinous buildings. But I apprehend that in this case it does not contribute to sublimity, except only when it suggests remote antiquity, which is both awful and sublime, for reasons that are afterwards to be mentioned. Where ruggedness suggests neither violence nor antiquity it is

only picturesque; a character which, although frequently united both with the sublime and the beautiful, is perfectly distinct from either.

It is also agreeable to the theory, that if other things are the same, the sublime should be felt incomparably stronger when power is actually exhibited, than when it is only suggested. We admire a lofty mountain; but a large fragment of rock, though comparatively diminutive, tumbling from its summit, would be far more striking. A large body of water at rest is a grand object, yet partaking much of the beautiful; but how sublime does it appear, when it descends with the impetuosity and weight of a cataract: Few sights in the universe are nobler than the vast expanse of the sea in a calm; but what words can express our emotion,

> When Ocean groaning from his lowest bed
> Heaves his tempestuous billows to the sky!*

We can also understand, how we ascribe sublimity to sounds of uncommon loudness, as

* Akenside, Pleasures of the Imagination, book 3.

the noise of many waters, the roaring of the winds, the shouts of a great multitude, the discharge of ordnance, or thunder. It proceeds not only from the violent concussions by which we conceive them to be produced, but still more perhaps from a very natural and irresistible association of ideas. For as all the violent actions of great bodies upon each other are attended with noise, hence every sound of uncommon loudness will suggest the idea of violent action, even although we should neither see nor know in what the action consists. Hence the sublimity of thunder: although no concussion is either seen or felt, yet we cannot hear it without the imagination of the heavens falling into ruins.

It is a common observation, that the sublimity of sounds is increased by their roughness and gravity. Now both of these qualities are very remarkable in the noises which generally proceed from the impetuous dashings of great masses on each other. In fact, loudness, roughness, and gravity, are the only properties of sound which suggest the idea of force. The

other properties, such as smoothness, sweetness, shrillness, tend on the contrary to produce a state of mind very different from what we would call a sublime emotion; and consequently, when they are remarkable, will soften or alter the effect, which the loudness would otherwise have occasioned.

The effect of the sublime qualities hitherto mentioned is readily accounted for; but we meet with others, of which the explanation is not so obvious.

Thus great splendour is universally regarded as sublime; but how do we reconcile it to the theory? Shall we say that it suggests the power of the Creator, who diffuses through the universe that flood of glory which illuminates the depths of space, buried before in eternal darkness? Or shall we say, that it recals to our imagination the regions inhabited by the angels of bliss, and the Heaven of heavens, where God has fixed the throne of his glory in the midst of light inaccessible? These undoubtedly are sublime ideas; but perhaps the first is too refined,

and the last too serious, to be always present when we are affected with splendour. Still, is there not a remarkable tendency in splendour to inspire us with joy, confidence, and courage, and thus to render us conscious of the force of our mind, and perhaps to give us a deceitful feeling of a still greater force than we actually possess?

It is perhaps more difficult to account for the effects of the colours which are favourable to the sublime. These Mr. Burke reckons to be black, and all the fuscous colours, such as brown or deep purple, and likewise strong red. Thus he observes that a mountain covered with a shining turf is nothing in respect of sublimity to one that is dark and gloomy. Now we can scarcely say that such colours either exhibit power, or render us conscious of it, or any how suggest its idea. Perhaps we should go no farther than to say, that they somehow predispose the mind to be more deeply affected with either the sublime or the terrible; and indeed they appear to

be more peculiarly adapted to the latter than to the former.*

We cannot well doubt that colours have a considerable effect on the mind, independently of any associated ideas. There is many a colour which we look upon with pleasure, although it be only exhibited in a single detached ribbon, or bit of cloth. It is evident too, that children are much delighted with these exhibitions. And Mr. Cheselden in his Anatomy mentions the case of a young man of fourteen, to whom he had

* This paragraph, which is precisely the same as in the first Edition, called forth the following animadversion from the incomparable critic who is quoted in the note p. 58; but it will be proper to prefix the short sentence already transcribed in that note.

" He (the Author) is peculiarly unfortunate in dwelling " upon the sublime effect of looking down a precipice, in- " stead of looking up to an equal height, as an illustration " of his doctrine, which is so direct a proof of the theory " that resolves sublimity into terror. He is equally so in " endeavouring to resolve the sublimity of colours into their " expressiveness of power; for it is not conceivable in what " manner a mountain that is covered with a dark and " gloomy heath should indicate more power than one " clothed in verdant turf, though every one is aware that " it is much more sublime." British Critic for June, 1810.

given sight by the operation of couching, and who was differently affected by the different colours the very first time they were presented to him. In particular, he was pleased with scarlet most of all; and of the other colours the gayest were the most agreeable to him, whereas black gave him great uneasiness.

It may be difficult or impossible to explain these facts; but surely it will not be considered as peculiar to the case of colour, that bodily sensations should affect, and remarkably too, the disposition of the mind. This will be acknowledged in sound still more readily than in colour. Indeed, the thrilling effect, which many sounds produce mechanically upon the body, renders it sufficiently evident, that their influence is not to be ascribed entirely to associated ideas. Accordingly it appears highly probable, that the state of mind, which sounds of uncommon loudness, roughness, and gravity, would of themselves produce, either coincides with or favours the emotion raised by the idea of power, which they irresistibly suggest. And although the forms which we call

sublime may owe their principal effect to the imagination, yet it is not unlikely, that the emotion is favoured by the impression which they make upon the eye. Mr. Burke says, that terror is the state of mind produced by this impression. It may be so; and terror will certainly dispose us to be more deeply affected with the ideas of force and violence, although there are insurmountable reasons against admitting this emotion to be the characteristic of the sublime.

Again; what shall we say of another source of the sublime mentioned by Mr. Burke, and very different from any thing which has yet been considered? namely, the absence, or privation, as he calls it, of any of the qualities by which external objects manifest themselves to our senses of seeing, hearing, or feeling? Under this description are comprehended darkness, silence, vacuity, and solitude. These privations I apprehend to be rather sources of terror, although they often are united to the sublime, and heighten its effect. And they will also become sublime in themselves, when we

consider them as produced by mighty power, or when by any association they suggest that idea. Of this we have a striking instance in the history, ascribed to Mr. Burke, of the European settlements in America. In the destruction of Callao by the great earthquake, it is said that only one man survived; who reported, "that the sea retired to a great "distance, and returned in a vast wave; *the* "*cry of miserere was heard in the streets, and* "*in a moment all was silent.*"*

We have still to consider whence arises the sublimity of great or infinite duration, space, or numbers. Here it is to be observed, that duration destitute of events, and space destitute of substances, are among the number of privations, and in this view are sources of terror. The greater we conceive the duration and the space, it is only to wander the longer and the farther in darkness, silence, vacuity, and solitude, the most dreary of all contemplations.

* This man was a sentry on guard, and escaped by leaping into a boat which the wave was carrying past him.

Still, however, duration and space may, even in the abstract, become sublime, when their greatness or infinity renders us conscious of the power of our mind in embracing such ideas, or leads our thoughts to the infinity of the divine nature. But indeed, without an effort which it is not easy to continue, we cannot but associate with long duration the great events, which have or might have been transacted in the course of it, and with immense space the mighty objects, with which it either is or might be replenished. And we are also to remember, that these associations naturally awaken our minds to the power of the Almighty, as it is displayed both in creation and in providence.

There is, besides, a curious association of power with the idea of time; an association, which, although it may at first appear an over-refinement, yet perhaps upon second thoughts will be found natural to every mind. As all the most solid and durable productions both of art and nature rise to perfection, decay, and are destroyed in the course of time; hence with the idea of time there is irresistibly con-

nected the idea of the power adequate for accomplishing such mighty changes: insomuch that we are scarcely sensible of a metaphor, when we ascribe the power to time itself. Thus the poet classes time with all that is most effectual to destroy; with iron, and fire, and the anger of Jove.

> Jamque opus exegi, quod nec Jovis ira, nec ignes,
> Nec poterit ferrum, nec edax abolere vetustas.

And the association will be more striking, when the effects of this supposed power are actually before our eyes, as in the ruins of an ancient building; more especially as the real causes of that destruction, which naturally takes place in the lapse of ages, are not such as readily present themselves to the imagination. Nor is the association peculiar to time: we naturally ascribe power in like manner to the most subtle and visionary things, even to mere negations, such as cold or darkness, when they happen to be attended with great or alarming effects.

With regard to numbers, it is perhaps sufficient to say, that they are not conceivable

without things numbered; and that we do not ascribe sublimity to numbers, unless there is sublimity in the assemblage of the things themselves; as in a great army, or any vast multitude of men. If it shall be asserted, that we sometimes have a sense of sublimity in the contemplation of great abstract numbers, or where we pay no attention to any particular things that are numbered; I know not to what we are to refer it, but to our admiration at the power of the human capacity in arranging and operating upon such vast and complicated assemblages.

The moral sublime consists in the exertions of extraordinary force of mind. It is displayed in various forms: in that industry which cannot be turned aside from its pursuit by labour, or hardships, or the distance of the acquisition; in those superior abilities, the portion of so small a number of the human race, which surmount the difficulties that exclude all the rest of the world from discovery in science or invention in the arts; in that fortitude, which neither pain, nor affliction, nor the threatenings of death and

destruction can subdue; in that heroic virtue, which scorns to yield to the most powerful allurements or overwhelming terrors.

Our admiration is awakened by extraordinary force of mind, in whatever form it is displayed, and even when unhappily it is exerted for unworthy purposes. But it will be readily understood, that our admiration is blended with different emotions according to the particular cases. It is blended with our approbation or abhorrence of the conduct in a moral view; and with the feelings which arise from the consideration of its utility or hurtfulness. Moreover, there is for the most part excited by sympathy a consciousness of some degree of that energy which we admire in others. And our sense of the sublime appears to consist both in this admiration, and also in the sympathetic elevation of our own minds, however deceitful or transient this latter feeling may too often prove. The vigour which we admire in others may indeed be such as to humble, not to exalt, our conception of our own character; but then our admiration will be

so much the higher: and thus our sense of the sublime will not be diminished, but may be greatly increased.

Upon the whole, the theory suggested by Dr. Blair affords a clearer explanation and a fuller view of the subject, than any other with which I am acquainted. It remains to consider the principles, which an author ought to remember, who turns our attention to sublime objects.

The general principle pointed out by the theory is to represent the objects in such a manner, as may give us the liveliest idea of extraordinary power. But for this purpose a different management is required in different cases.

We may first observe, that in representing the operations of living agents on external objects, our idea of the power will be heightened, the more the operation is wrapped in obscurity and mystery; for thus the imagination is left at liberty, and even roused to conjecture more than can be told. By neglecting this principle, and upon an occasion too which

might well have suggested it, Milton has lost much of the effect, that might have been expected from his lofty genius on one of the grandest of all subjects, the creation of the world. Instead of availing himself of its natural and awful mysteriousness, he has studied to render it familiar, by describing it in detail as a mechanical process. For example:

> He took the golden compasses, prepar'd
> In God's eternal store, to circumscribe
> The universe and all created things;
> One foot he centred, and the other turn'd.*

In point of sublimity Milton's description is nothing, compared with the following verses in the passage from the Scripture, of which it is a paraphrase. "In the beginning God created "the Heaven and the Earth. And the Earth "was without form and void; and darkness "was upon the face of the deep. And the "Spirit of God moved upon the face of the "waters. And God said, Let there be light: "and there was light."†

In the description of external objects, our

* Paradise Lost, Book vii. † Genesis i. 1—3.

sense of the sublime may be awakened in different ways. For, in the first place, they may be represented as produced, or as acted upon, by extraordinary power; and here obscurity and mystery will heighten the effect. We have an admirable example in Milton's address to light at the beginning of the third book of Paradise Lost: but in quoting this passage I shall omit a few lines, which follow the first in the original, because they appear to many persons to confound the literal and metaphorical meanings of the word light, and thus to proceed on a quibble, which deprives them both of sense and sublimity.

> Hail, holy Light! offspring of Heav'n firstborn!
> Or hear'st thou rather, pure ethereal stream,
> Whose fountain who shall tell? Before the sun,
> Before the heav'ns thou wert; and, at the voice
> Of God, as with a mantle didst invest
> The rising world of waters, dark and deep,
> Won from the void and formless infinite.

Again; the external objects themselves may be represented as acting with irresistible violence. And here it is to be observed, that the imagination readily ascribes power, not only to

the solid masses of matter, the action of which is manifest, but also, as we formerly remarked, to more subtle and visionary agents, such as Fire, Frost, Darkness, Time (some of which are mere negations), when they happen to be attended with great or alarming events. We have a good illustration in the following account from Thomson's Seasons of the effects of winter on the northern coasts of Tartary. Speaking of the mountains of ice piled upon these coasts, he says—

> Projected huge and horrid o'er the surge
> Alps frown on Alps; or rushing hideous down,
> As if old Chaos was again return'd,
> Wide rend the deep, and shake the solid pole.
> Ocean itself no longer can resist
> The binding fury; but, in all its rage
> Of tempest taken by the boundless frost,
> Is many a fathom to the bottom chain'd,
> And bid to roar no more. * * * *
> * * * * * * * * * * * *
> * * * * * * Miserable they,
> Who here entangled in the gath'ring ice,
> Take their last look of the descending sun,
> While full of death, and fierce with tenfold frost,
> The long, long night incumbent o'er their heads
> Falls horrible.

If it does not suit the author's design, to represent the objects directly in either of these views which have been mentioned, still both of these views may be indirectly suggested. For the objects may be described in such a manner, that we cannot but reflect on the immense power, which would be requisite to produce or to affect them: and they may also be represented as able, or even as threatening, to exert an irresistible force. Thus when Thomson, a few verses before those which have been just quoted, speaks of "icy mountains high on mountains "pil'd;" the awful pile instantly appears to the imagination, as if it had been reared at once by some tremendous effort, even though we know that it has only been a very long and gradual accumulation of snow showers. At any rate, however it may have been formed, now that the pile is reared, we are lost in admiration at the incomparably more than human might, which would be required to move it from its base. Again; when we are told, that

> Projecting huge and horrid o'er the surge
> Alps frown on Alps;

the imagination, even before the description of the event itself, is alarmed at the violence with which these enormous masses threaten to crush one another, and to plunge into the ocean beneath.

When the author would in this manner suggest the force with which the objects are capable of acting, those metaphors which ascribe to them life and even sentiment will have a natural place, and bring the description nearer to the case where the force is actually exerted. Such is the figure in the passage now quoted; "Alps frown on Alps." So likewise Gray, in his celebrated ode entitled The Bard:

> On a rock, whose haughty brow
> Frowns o'er old Conway's foaming flood.

In the same poem we have another admirable example, when the oaks, the caves, and the torrents of Snowdon are represented as threatening to wreck all their fury on the merciless Edward.

> Hark! how each giant oak and desert cave
> Sighs to the torrent's awful voice beneath.
> O'er thee, O king, their hundred arms they wave,
> Revenge on thee in hoarser murmurs breathe.

In the moral sublime it is evident, that the author ought to represent in as striking a view as possible, on the one hand, the difficulties to be surmounted, and on the other, the vigour of mind with which they are encountered. I know nothing of the kind, which equals in point of masterly execution Satan's reflections on his own misery, in his address to the sun. But the picture is so shocking, that, sublime as it is, we turn from it with pain and abhorrence. It is true, that the more dreadful we conceive his misery, we must so much the more admire his undaunted resolution. But it is to be remarked, that although admiration of great power, and particularly of mental energy, is a lively emotion, yet several other emotions, such as terror, pity, and the tender affections, are far more interesting, and may be raised so high as not only to engross, but to overwhelm the

mind. Accordingly in the passage which we are now considering the horrible is so predominant, that the fainter emotions of the sublime are little distinguished.

> Me miserable! which way shall I fly
> Infinite wrath and infinite despair?
> Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell;
> And, in the lowest deep, a lower deep,
> Still threat'ning to devour me, opens wide,
> To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heav'n.

Besides, our abhorrence of a wickedness so desperate, that even such misery could not subdue it, diminishes not only the pleasure, but even the sensation of grandeur. But the exhibition of a depravity less shocking may leave us still open to the admiration of uncommon fortitude; while our admiration will be increased by the terrors to be encountered, if they are less hideous, and less beyond our conception of what the utmost human vigour is able to endure. Of this we have a good instance in the following animated description by Sallust of the conduct of Catiline and his army, when they were destroyed by the forces of the state.

* " Postquam fusas copias, seque cum pau-
" cis relictum videt Catilina; memor generis
" atque pristinæ dignitatis suæ, in confestis-
" simos hostes incurrit, ibique pugnans con-
" foditur. Sed confecto prœlio, tum vero
" cerneres quanta audacia quantaque animi vis
" fuisset in exercitu Catilinæ. Nam fere
" quem quisque vivus pugnando locum ce-
" perat, eum amissa anima corpore tegebat.
" Pauci autem quos medios cohors prætoria
" disjecerat, paullo diversius, sed omnes ta-
" men adversis vulneribus conciderant. Ca-
" tilina vero, longe a suis inter hostium
" cadavera repertus est, paululum etiam spi-

* After Catiline sees his forces destroyed, and but a few remaining to support him; mindful of his family and former dignity, he rushes into the thickest of the enemy, and there fights till he is slain. But when the battle was over, then indeed you might perceive what boldness and force of mind had been exerted by Catiline's army. For almost every one covered with his dead body the place which he had occupied in the fight. Only a few in the middle, whom the pretorian cohort had broken, fell a little scattered, yet all with honourable wounds. But it was far from his soldiers, and amidst the bodies of his slaughtered enemies that Catiline was found, still breathing a little, and his features still animated with his natural ferocity.

"rans, ferociamque animi quam habuerat vivus
"in vultu retinens."

But it is a far more delightful, as well as useful display of the moral sublime, when the vigour of mind discovers itself in virtuous exertions; where a good man struggles undaunted with the storms of adversity, braves all hardships and dangers in some honourable pursuit, or deliberately prefers destruction to disgrace. "Ecce spectaculum dignum in quod respiciat, operi suo intentus, Deus; bonum virum cum magnis infortuniis colluctantem."*

In all the cases which have been mentioned since the observations on the theory, the terrible, and sometimes the distressful, are more or less incorporated with the sublime; and may be employed on many occasions, either to increase our idea of the power, or to maintain that serious frame, which is necessary for

* Here is a sight which God may vouchsafe to regard, for such virtue is his own work; a good man struggling with great calamities. SENECA.

the full effect. Thus, Milton in the description of Satan at the head of his infernal hosts:

> He, above the rest
> In shape and gesture proudly eminent,
> Stood like a tow'r. His form had not yet lost
> All her original brightness, nor appear'd
> Less than archangel ruin'd, and th' excess
> Of glory obscur'd: As when the sun new ris'n
> Looks through the horizontal misty air,
> Shorn of his beams; or from behind the moon,
> In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds
> On half the nations, and with fear of change
> Perplexes monarchs. Darken'd so, yet shone
> Above them all th' archangel.

In the representation of external objects, both the sublime and the terrible may be heightened, and also the distressful brought forward, by the introduction of living creatures, particularly human beings; a circumstance which has so fine an effect, that it ought never to be omitted, if we wish to render interesting any description of inanimate nature. We cannot but feel how grand and awful Milton has rendered the eclipse of the sun by this very circumstance. And we have also remarkable

instances in the passages already quoted from Gray's ode, and from Thomson's account of the Polar winter.

In the cases which we are now considering, terror will be a good preparation to render us more sensible either of that awful power, which is displayed in the natural sublime, or of those alarms or distresses, which in the moral sublime call forth and prove the vigour of mind. We have a fine example in the song of Mador, the chief of the bards, in Mason's Caractacus. The beginning of it might be quoted as a specimen of the terrible: but we are at present to observe, that it prepares us for the highest admiration of the enthusiastic courage described in this animated ode.

I. 1.

Hark! heard ye not yon footstep dread,
That shook the earth with thund'ring tread?
'Twas Death.—In haste
The warrior past;
High tow'r'd his helmed head,
I mark'd his mail, I mark'd his shield,
I spied the sparkling of his spear,
I saw his giant arm the falchion wield;
Wide wav'd the bickering blade, and fir'd the angry air.

I. 2.

On me, he cried, my Britons, wait;
To lead you to the field of fate
I come: yon car,
That cleaves the air,
Descends to throne my state.
I mount your champion and your god;
My proud steeds neigh beneath the thong:
Hark! to my wheels of brass that rattle loud!
Hark! to my clarion shrill, that brays the woods among!

I. 3.

Fear not now the fever's fire,
Fear not now the death-bed groan,
Pangs that torture, pains that tire,
Bedrid age with feeble moan.
These domestic terrors wait,
Hourly at my palace gate;
And when o'er slothful realms my rod I wave,
These on the tyrant king and coward slave
Rush with vindictive rage, and drag them to the grave.

II. 1.

But you, my sons, at this dread hour
Shall share the fulness of my pow'r:
From all your bows,
In levell'd rows,
My own dread shafts shall show'r.
Go then to conquest, gladly go,
Deal forth my dole of destiny;
With all my fury dash the trembling foe
Down to those darksome cells, where Rome's pale spectres lie,

II. 2.

Where creeps the ninefold stream profound
Her black inexorable round,
And on the bank
To willows dank
The shiv'ring ghosts are bound.
Twelve thousand crescents all shall swell
To full orb'd pride, and all decline,
Ere they again in life's gay mansions dwell.
Not such the meed, that crowns the sons of freedom's line;

II. 3.

No, my Britons, battle-slain!
Rapture gilds your parting hour;
I, that all despotic reign,
Claim but there a moment's power.
Swiftly the soul of British flame
Animates some kindred frame,
Swiftly to life and light triumphant flies,
Exults again in martial ecstasies,
Again for freedom fights, again for freedom dies.

Pity, and the tender affections, where the case permits, will introduce the moral sublime with great effect. When we detest a person, our admiration of his fortitude is extorted from us, and mixed with unpleasant feelings: whereas it is cordial and delightful, if we are attached to him either from pity to his suf-

ferings, or from regard to his amiable qualities; and no character is so engaging, as that which unites heroic fortitude to a kind and compassionate heart. Besides, we approach the persons of the miserable not only with pity and affection, but with a certain degree of reverence also; a state of mind highly favourable to increase our admiration of their magnanimous exertions. Mason likewise affords us a good specimen of such a preparation in the last scene of Caractacus. The unhappy king, degraded and ruined in his old age, bewails in these lines the death of his son:

Yes, best lov'd boy,
Yes, I can weep, can fall upon thy corse,
And I can tear my hairs, these few gray hairs,
The only honours war and age have left me.
Ah, son! thou might'st have rul'd o'er many nations,
As did thy royal ancestry; but I,
Rash that I was, ne'er knew the golden curb
Discretion hangs on bravery; else perchance
These men, that fasten fetters on thy father,
Had su'd to him for peace, and claim'd his friendship.

Aulus Didius takes this occasion to remind him

of his obstinacy in opposing the power of the Romans;

> But thou wast still implacable to Rome,
> And scorn'd her friendship.

Caractacus, starting from the dead body of his son, instantly replies,

> Soldier, I had arms,
> Had neighing steeds to whirl my iron cars,
> Had wealth, dominion. Dost thou wonder, Roman,
> I fought to save them?

The sublime is not always so intimately united with the terrible, and far less with the distressful. On the contrary, the mighty power which we admire may be exerted in acts of protection and of bounty; it may be the foundation of our security, enjoyment, and hope. And, in general, whatever has a remarkable influence to inspire the mind with confidence and courage, will from that very circumstance be felt as sublime. In such cases it is evident, that the power ought not to be described with that awful mysteriousness, which has so great an effect on other occasions. The terrible and the distressful, if they are brought forward at all, ought to be touched with a gentler hand,

and employed only by way of introduction or contrast, to improve our feeling of the happier and more encouraging representations.

In this spirit is the following passage from Thomson's hymn at the conclusion of the Seasons:

> Should Fate command me to the farthest verge
> Of the green earth, to hostile barbarous climes,
> Rivers unknown to song, where first the sun
> Gilds Indian mountains, or his setting beam
> Flames on the Atlantic Isles; 'tis nought to me,
> Since God is ever present, ever felt
> In the void waste as in the city full,
> Rolls the same kindred seasons round the world,
> In all apparent, wise and good in all.

The beginning of the morning hymn of our first parents, though it contains no contrast with terror or distress, is still a finer specimen of the elevating sublime:

> These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
> Almighty! thine this universal frame,
> Thus wondrous fair; thyself how wondrous then!
> Unspeakable, who sitt'st above these heav'ns,
> To us invisible, or dimly seen
> In these thy lowest works; yet these declare
> Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine.

Speak ye who best can tell, ye sons of light,
Angels; for ye behold him, and with songs
And choral symphonies, day without night,
Circle his throne rejoicing.*

The most delightful, as well as useful purposes for which the sublime can be introduced into composition, are to awaken us to the magnificence of nature, and the infinite majesty of its Divine Author; to inspire us with courage in the paths of honour and duty; to rouse us to the emulation of heroic virtue; to render us superior to the ills of life, and to the slavery of ignoble passions, by reminding us of the dignity and the prospects of the human soul.

The Scriptures afford us the noblest examples. In what glory is all nature arrayed, when we are led by the Psalmist to look beyond the outward appearance of things to that God, who pervades and actuates the universe! "Bless the Lord, O my soul. O "Lord my God, thou art very great; thou "art clothed with honour and majesty: who

* Paradise Lost, Book V.

" coverest thyself with light as with a gar-
" ment: who stretchest out the heavens like a
" curtain: who layeth the beams of his cham-
" bers in the waters: who maketh the clouds
" his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of
" the wind: who maketh his angels spirits; his
" ministers a flaming fire: who laid the found-
" ations of the earth, that it should not be re-
" moved for ever.*

How happy and how virtuous an elevation is inspired, when we are taught, that he who created the host of Heaven vouchsafes to visit man on earth, and has given him a kindred nature with the celestial powers. " When I
" consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
" the moon and the stars which thou hast
" ordained; What is man, that thou art mind-
" ful of him? and the son of man, that thou
" visitest him? For thou hast made him a
" little lower than the angels, and hast crowned
" him with glory and honour."† It is true that St. Paul considers this passage to be

* Psalm 104. † Psalm 8.

applicable to the Messiah in its higher meaning: but it is evident, that it has also a more general meaning, and refers to the native dignity of man, who was formed in the image, and is still protected by the fatherly care of the Almighty.

In the hundred and third psalm, after an affecting description of the mercy of the Lord to his servants in their present state of frailty and mortality, the sublime is introduced with singular address to raise them to the most delightful hopes, by representing their gracious protector as the Sovereign of Nature, whom the angels serve, and the universe obeys throughout all its immensity. "Like as a father "pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them "that fear him. For he knoweth our frame, "he remembereth that we are dust. As "for man, his days are as grass: as a flower "of the field so he flourisheth. For the wind "passeth over it, and it is gone; and the "place thereof shall know it no more. But "the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to "everlasting upon them that fear him, and his

" righteousness unto children's children; to
" such as keep his covenant, and to those that
" remember his commandments to do them.—
" The Lord hath prepared his throne in the
" heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.
" Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in
" strength, that do his commandments, heark-
" ening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye
" the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of
" his, that do his pleasure. Bless the Lord, all
" his works, in all places of his dominion.
" Bless the Lord, O my soul."

While the sublime may be thus employed to animate our best and happiest feelings, yet on the other hand it may sometimes dazzle us so far, that the most destructive vices shall not appear in their real colours; that we shall not only admire the unconquerable fortitude of Marius, but also be less shocked with his vindictive cruelty; that the desperate courage of Catiline shall palliate his unprincipled treason; and the magnanimity of Cesar atone for his unjust ambition. Care, therefore, ought to be taken, that what we should

detest and avoid, may be pointed out in as striking a light as what we should admire and imitate.

But useful and delightful as the sublime may be rendered, an author should not endeavour to keep our imagination long upon the stretch: for either our attention will flag, or the effort will become irksome, and even our sensibility decay. We require to be relieved with what is more familiar, or engaged with what is more interesting. Hence it is, that in spite of the masterly execution, it becomes tedious to read from end to end the first two books of Paradise Lost: while we are much longer attracted by the Æneid or the Odyssey, in which the elevation is far from being either so high or so constant.

ESSAY IV.

ON TERROR.

It must appear at first sight not a little surprising, that terror should in any case be a source of pleasure. Yet every one knows, however difficult it may be to give a satisfactory account of it, that the compositions which agitate with terror are extremely attractive: Children, in spite of very uneasy feelings, listen with eagerness to the most dreadful tales of robberies, murders, and spectres. Even real scenes of terror, an execution, a conflagration, or a shipwreck, would draw numerous spectators from the gayest assembly, without the smallest expectation of affording any relief to the sufferers.

This pleasure has been ascribed to a secret

comparison of the danger of others with our own security. So Lucretius, in the well-known passage at the beginning of his second book:

> Suave, mari magno, turbantibus æquora ventis,
> E terra magnum alterius spectare laborem.
> Non quia vexari quemquam est jucunda voluptas,
> Sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave est.
> Suave etiam belli certamina magna tueri
> Per campos instructa, tua sine parte pericli.

Such a comparison is no doubt highly agreeable, and forms a considerable part of the pleasure derived from the view of terrible scenes. But we are farther to observe, that the agitation of terror itself appears to be delightful, when it does not bear too great a proportion to our strength of mind. The danger of a fox-chase is not its least attraction. And there are persons who languish in ease and luxury, but whose spirits are elevated amidst the alarms of war. Bishop Burnet, who lived long with King William, gives the following account of him: "His behaviour "was solemn and serious, seldom cheerful, "and but with a few. He spoke little and "very slowly, and most commonly with a

" disgusting dryness, which was his character
" at all times, except in a day of battle; for
" then he was all fire, though without passion:
" he was then every-where, and looked to
" every thing."* Thus we see, that even the presence of real danger serves only to enliven certain minds, not to distress them. And we can easily conceive, that the most timorous may receive a pleasing agitation from the gentler movements, which are excited by descriptions and tales of terror.

Nor ought it to be considered as an extraordinary fact in our nature, that the same emotion, which is painful and intolerable in its higher degrees, should yet be delightful in its gentler movements. Mr. Burke has well observed in his Inquiry into the Sublime, that there are analogous instances, in which it will be readily acknowledged, that a given cause produces pleasure or pain according to its intensity. The most delightful fragrance becomes insupportable, when it is much increased.

* Conclusion of the Reign of King William.

Too great sweetness cloys and disgusts; while acidity and bitterness refresh, when diluted. Nothing is more enlivening than moderate sunshine, or more insufferable than the full glare of the vertical sun.

Beside these causes of pleasure, which have been mentioned, we are to remember, that the unusual and alarming situation, in which the characters are represented, must awaken our curiosity both with regard to their fate, and with regard to their conduct and appearance, in circumstances where the utmost fortitude, or fortitude more than human, would be requisite for their support. And, perhaps, it is in the gratification of this curiosity, that the pleasure of many persons chiefly consists.

If to all this we add, that the imagination may be elevated to the sublimest conceptions; and that the gentler and endearing emotions of pity, with all the charms of composition, may be blended to soften the dreadful: it would appear, that we may account in a satisfactory manner for the pleasure, which may be derived

from writings, whose object is to raise ou. terror.

We are now to consider the principles, which an author ought to observe in those passages, where terror is to be the chief source of pleasure.

In the first place he is to remember, that the effect of terrible objects is greatly heightened by obscurity. A particular, and still more a minute description defeats its own purpose. Even when the objects are before us, our terror is much diminished, as soon as we can prevail upon ourselves to look at them steadily. There is then no longer room for the exaggeration of the fancy, which produces by far the greatest part of the emotion. The description ought, therefore, to be conducted by alarming hints, and in such a manner as to leave an uncertainty with regard to the extent of what is dangerous or dreadful in the objects represented. "How now," says Macbeth to the weird sisters, when he went to their cave at the dead hour of night,

> How now, ye secret, black, and midnight hags,
> What is 't ye do?

Their answer is,

> A deed without a name.

In Paradise Lost, when Raphael relates to our first parents the history of the apostate angels, our horror at the fate of their leader is greatly increased by a stroke of the same kind, but of still higher effect. It is where Raphael says, that the angelic host were reposing,

> Save those who, in their course,
> Melodious hymns about the sov'reign throne
> Alternate all night long. But not so wak'd
> Satan; so call him now, his former name
> Is heard no more in Heav'n. Book V.

Although Lucan's description of the magical rites of Erictho, the Thessalian sorceress, is in several places both tedious and disgusting, yet it contains some masterly strokes; and particularly in the following lines, where Erictho chides the delay of the furies, we have a good

instance of the effect of obscurity in magnifying the horrible.

Shall I now call you, says Erictho, by your real names? And thou, O Hecate, who art wont to approach the gods with a far different aspect, not thine own, shall I show thee as thou art, with thy pale livid form, and forbid thee to change thy face of Hell? Shall I tell the banquets, which detain thee under the ponderous earth? the union in which thou hast joined thyself to the grim king of darkness? the pollutions which have made thee an abomination to thy mother? Do you obey? or must *He* be called, at whose invocation the earth itself cannot but shudder? He, who beholds the Gorgons in all their horrors, and chastises with his scourge the trembling furies? He, who reigns in a lower deep, which ye have not seen, in a Hell to which yours is Heaven.

Jam vos ego nomine vero
Eliciam? * * * * *
Teque Deis, ad quos alio procedere vultu
Ficta soles, Hecate, pallenti livida forma

Ostendam, faciemque Erebi mutare vetabo?
Eloquar, immenso terræ sub pondere quæ te
Contineant, Ennæa, dapes? quo fœdere mœstum
Regem noctis ames? quæ te contagia passam
Noluerit revocare Ceres? * * * *
* * * * * * * *
* * * * Paretis? an Ille
Compellandus erit, quò nunquam terra vocatò
Non concussa tremit? qui Gorgona cernit apertam,
Verberibusque suis trepidam castigat Erinnyn;
Indespecta tenet vobis qui Tartara, cujus
Vos estis superi.*

In Satan's address to the Sun, Milton has introduced, but with a still more awful effect, the stroke which has been last quoted from Lucan:

In the lowest deep, a lower deep,
Still threat'ning to devour me, opens wide,
To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heav'n.

Upon the same principle, in paintings and theatrical representations, the objects of terror ought to be placed in obscurity. The witches in Macbeth, and the ghost in Hamlet, as they are generally represented, have rather a ludicrous effect. But I am persuaded it would

* Pharsalia, lib. vi.

be very different, if they were removed to a great distance at the bottom of the stage, and seen as obscurely as possible. It was a good observation of an exquisite artist,* that he could conceive a picture in which no human figure, nor action, nor any object very terrible in itself was represented, which yet should raise a high degree of horror. Such, he imagined, would be the effect of a picture representing a bedchamber, with a lady's slipper and a bloody dagger on the floor; and at the door, the foot of a man as just leaving the room. I have heard of a remarkable picture of the Deluge by Poussin, which was formerly in the gallery of the Luxembourg palace, at Paris. The only vestige of mankind was the ark, seen dimly through the haze in the distant back ground; and the only living creatures were in the fore ground, a horse drowning, hurried down by a torrent from the hills, and only his head above water; and a huge snake winding up the hill, as if to escape

* The late Mr. John Brown, of Edinburgh.

from the inundation in the valley below. The colouring of the whole was uniform, dull, and dreary, like that of a very rainy, hazy November day. The gentleman from whom I received this information mentioned also another picture, or sketch, by Raphael, which he thinks was in the Vatican. It is a representation of the Plague. The scene is a street, quite still and desolate, with only a starved cow in the back ground, reminding us at once of famine in the country and solitude in the town; and in the fore ground, one small group, a man, wife, and infant; the woman just dead; the child wanting to suck her breast; the father with one hand endeavouring gently to push the child away, and with the other hand covering his own nostrils, and turning aside his head. How much more awful are the few hints selected by these great masters, than if the pictures had been crowded with objects of horror.

One great advantage of language above painting is this, that the author has it in his

power to prepare us for the great impression. Now, in order that scenes of terror may have their full effect, we should previously be brought to a serious, and even a melancholy frame, and startled by sudden and obscure alarms. And the effect will be still more powerful, if we have been weakened by compassion.

In the first scene of Hamlet we are well prepared for the entry of the ghost, merely by having our attention turned to sublime objects, together with a single hint to alarm us. "Last "night of all," says Bernardo, to the officers who were on watch with him at midnight, and who had heard of the apparition;

> Last night of all,
> When yon same star, that's westward from the pole,
> Had made his course t' illume that part of Heav'n,
> Where now it burns; Marcellus and myself,
> The bell then beating one——

"Peace, break thee off," interrupted Marcellus, "Look where it comes again."

The introduction to Mador's song in Mason's Caractacus, which has been quoted in the fore-

going Essay on the Sublime, is an excellent preparation for the images of terror with which the song begins, while these images serve, as we have already remarked, to introduce the sublime with great effect.

There is a fine instance of the effect of pity as a preparation for the most dreadful horrors, in a German ballad which has been translated by a gentleman of Edinburgh, of high poetical genius, in the year 1796, under the title of William and Helen. The same poem was also translated under the title of Leonora, and accompanied with exquisite drawings by Lady Diana Beauclerc.

There is yet another way, in which terror may be introduced with a very striking effect; and that is, when it rises unexpectedly in the midst of a state of security, hope, or joy. But although the contrast will heighten the horrors, yet it is to be remembered, that this preparatory scene ought to be somewhat solemn or pathetic; otherwise the transition might be ludicrously abrupt. Goldsmith gives a fine instance in his beautiful and interesting novel of the Vicar of

Wakefield. The tender father was returning home at night, to prepare his family for the reception of his unfortunate child Olivia. "My "heart," he says, "caught new sensations of "pleasure, the nearer I approached that peaceful mansion. As a bird that had been frighted from its nest, my affections outwent my "haste, and hovered round my little fire-side "with all the rapture of expectation. I called "up the many fond things I had to say, and "anticipated the welcome I was to receive. I "already felt my wife's tender embrace, and "smiled at the joy of my little ones. As I "walked but slowly, the night waned apace. "The labourers of the day were all retired to "rest; the lights were out in every cottage; "no sounds were heard but of the shrilling "cock, and the deep-mouthed watch-dog, at "hollow distance. I approached my little "abode of pleasure, and before I was within a "furlong of the place, our honest mastiff came "running to welcome me.

"It was now near midnight, that I came to "knock at my door: all was still and silent:

" my heart dilated with unutterable happiness,
" when, to my amazement, I saw the house
" bursting out in a blaze of fire, and every
" aperture red with conflagration. I gave a
" loud convulsive outcry, and fell upon the
" pavement insensible."

But although the reader or spectator should be prepared for receiving the impressions of terror as forcibly as may be, it is not to be understood, that the approach of the particular object which is to raise it should be gradual, nor yet that it should be announced. On the contrary, the more suddenly it presents itself, the effect will be the greater. Hence I am inclined to think, that the witches in Macbeth ought not to have been heard of till the appearance of the general and his officers returning from the dangers of battle, and overtaken by a storm in the midst of the heath; for thus the audience would not only be in a frame fit for receiving the full force of the impression, but also the impression itself would be made more abruptly.

The observations which have been made concerning the effect of obscurity, uncertainty, and

alarms, of preparation, and of abruptness, suggest a remark of great importance. It is this; that the situation in which terror is carried to the utmost height, which the case will admit, is a state of suspense, when we know that some dreadful evil is every moment ready to fall on us, but at the same time have no distinct knowledge of its nature or degree; while our apprehensions are always kept alive by some new alarm, which seems to indicate the instant approach of the evil in all its horrors. We have an admirable example in the German ballad entitled Earl Walter, or the Chase. The hard-hearted oppressor, in his furious sport, had trampled on every obligation, human and divine; whence, as well as from the alarm given to the imagination by the introduction of the two unknown strangers, the one entreating him to return to reason, the other encouraging him in his madness, we are prepared to expect the most awful events. He comes up with his retinue, and horns and hounds in full cry, to a lonely hut, where the stag had taken refuge, the cell of a venerable hermit, whose mild

entreaties he answers with blasphemy and brutal scorn.

He spurs his horse, he winds his horn,
 "Hark forward, forward, holla, ho!"—
But off, on whirlwind's pinions borne,
 The stag, the hut, the hermit go;

And horse and man, and horn and hound,
 And clamour of the chase was gone:
For hoofs, and howls, and bugle sound,
 A deadly silence reign'd alone.

Wild gaz'd the affrighted Earl around;—
 He strove in vain to wake his horn,
In vain to call; for not a sound
 Could from his anxious lips be borne.

He listens for his trusty hounds;
 No distant baying reach'd his ears;
His courser, rooted to the ground,
 The quick'ning spur unmindful bears.

Still dark and darker round it spreads,
 Dark as the darkness of the grave;
And not a sound the still invades,
 Save what a distant torrent gave.

High o'er the sinner's humbled head
 At length the solemn silence broke;
And from a cloud of swarthy red,
 The awful voice of thunder spoke.

" Oppressor of creation fair!
" Apostate spirits' harden'd tool!
" Scorner of God! scourge of the poor!
" The measure of thy cup is full.

" Go hunt for ever through the wood,
" For ever roam the affrighted wild;
" And let thy fate instruct the proud,
" God's meanest creature is his child."

'Twas hush'd: one flash of sombre glare
With yellow ting'd the forests brown;
Up rose Earl Walter's bristling hair,
And horror chill'd each nerve and bone.

Cold pour'd the sweat in freezing rill:
A rising wind began to sing;
And louder, louder, louder still,
Brought storm and tempest on its wing.

The earth is rock'd, it quakes, it rends;
From yawning rifts with many a yell,
Mix'd with sulphureous flames, ascend
The misbegotten dogs of Hell.

What ghastly huntsman next arose,
Well may I guess, but dare not tell:
His eye like midnight lightning glows,
His steed the swarthy hue of Hell.

Earl Walter flies o'er bush and thorn,
With many a shriek of helpless woe ; &c.*

The poem which we have just quoted reminds us of another important principle, too frequently overlooked: that for rendering works of this kind more pleasing, and more instructive also, it is the guilty only who should be the victims of horror, more especially if the horror be inflicted by supernatural means. This, however, is not to be understood, as if it were improper to represent the most innocent or virtuous characters in a dreadful situation. The appearance even of an angel from Heaven with the most

* This ballad of Earl Walter was published along with that formerly mentioned of William and Helen, being both translated by the same hand. Both translations are of distinguished merit; but perhaps the former is in a more finished and masterly manner. But since these translations were printed, the author of them, Walter Scott, Esquire, has acquired great and deserved celebrity by his original compositions, particularly by the Lay of the Last Minstrel, Marmion, and the Lady of the Lake, in which a minute acquaintance with the history and antiquities of his country is happily united to a poetical genius of the highest order.

joyful tidings would be at first alarming to the very best of mankind. Besides, it may have a good effect to employ terror as a trial of integrity, or of fortitude: as when in the Gerusalemme Liberata, Rinaldo braves the horrible phantoms of the enchanted forest. Still, however, we must be shocked, when the innocent, or when venial offenders, are pursued and overwhelmed with those Gorgon terrors, those more awful marks of Heaven's vengeance, which we naturally conceive to be reserved for the more hardened and atrocious criminal. We see some propriety in the horrible fate of Earl Walter: but in the poem of William and Helen we are grievously shocked, that some foolish words uttered by a harmless girl in the phrensy of despair should be instantly followed by so signal and awful a punishment. We could bear that she should endure the horrors of such a dream, to teach her resignation, and reconcile her to her lot: but that the punishment should be actually inflicted, does not accord with our feelings, or with our natural ideas of Providence.

The same defect is to be found in two

Greek tragedies of uncommon merit, the Œdipus Tyrannus, and the Œdipus Coloneus, the former of which has been generally considered as the masterpiece of the Athenian theatre. The unhappy prince is led by a series of untoward events, in which he had little or rather no blame, to kill his father and to marry his mother. The first tragedy represents his gradual discovery of his dreadful situation; upon which he tears out his eyes with his own hands, and dooms himself to perpetual exile as an outcast of Heaven and Earth. In the second drama we find him wandering in these miserable circumstances, driven and goaded on by the furies, as if he were in reality the most guilty of mortals, till he reaches their accursed grove in the neighbourhood of Athens, where he perishes by an unknown death, unseen and unheard. Now, although both of these tragedies possess high merit, as exhibitions of terror, yet they certainly would have been more pleasing, if the character of Œdipus had been less unsuitable to his fate.

Here it is proper to caution the English reader against trusting implicitly to Franklin's translation; for although it is in general a good one, yet some passages are wrested, and even some expressions, not to be found in the original, are added, to insinuate the idea, that Œdipus was a haughty and impious prince. But I will venture to assert, that any person, who reads the original, will be impressed with a most favourable opinion of his character.

Another fault, not unfrequent in passages of terror, is too great minuteness in the description of disgusting objects. It is true, that such objects often accompany, or are united with the terrible: but as they never can be pleasing in themselves, they ought not to be represented any farther than to give to the terrible its full effect; and it has been already observed, that it is not by minuteness of description the full effect is to be obtained. We have glaring examples of this mistake in Milton's picture of Sin, and Lucan's account of the Thessalian Sorceries.

On the contrary, it should be remembered, that in a poetical imagination the most natural as well as the finest union of the terrible is with the sublime. In fact, although these two characters are quite distinct from each other, yet they have a near affinity, and in every instance, perhaps, where the sublime appears in external nature, it is united with more or less of the terrible. Milton affords a noble instance of the effect of this union in a description of the most horrible of all scenes. The passage is part of Belial's speech to the fallen angels, when they first deliberate about the conduct which they ought to pursue.

> Wherefore cease we then?
> Say they who counsel war; we are decreed,
> Reserv'd and destin'd to eternal woe;
> Whatever doing, what can we suffer more,
> What can we suffer worse? Is this then worst,
> Thus sitting, thus consulting, thus in arms?
> What, when we fled amain, pursu'd and struck
> With Heav'n's afflicting thunder, and besought
> The deep to shelter us? this Hell then seem'd
> A refuge from these wounds: or when we lay
> Chain'd on the burning lake? that sure was worse.
> What if the breath, that kindled those grim fires,

Awak'd, should blow them into sevenfold rage,
And plunge us in the flame? or, from above,
Should intermitted vengeance arm again
His red right hand to plague us? what if all
Her stores were open'd, and this firmament
Of Hell should spout her cataracts of fire,
Impendent horrors, threatening hideous fall
One day upon our heads; while we perhaps
Designing or exhorting glorious war,
Caught in a fiery tempest shall be hurl'd
Each on his rock transfix'd, the sport and prey
Of wracking whirlwinds; or for ever sunk
Under yon boiling ocean, wrapp'd in chains,
There to converse with everlasting groans,
Unrespited, unpitied, unrepriev'd,
Ages of hopeless end?*

There is still another principle, which, in works at least of any considerable length, ought not to be forgot by an author, who would render terror a source of pleasure: It is, that he should relieve us seasonably from the violence of this emotion by directing our attention to soothing objects. Thus Sir Joshua Reynolds has observed, that in a painting which represents any dreadful scene, there ought to be some beautiful object, on which

* Paradise Lost, book II.

the eye can rest with pleasure, to relieve the spectator from his distress when it becomes too powerful. And here it is to be remarked, that the emotion may by this means be both heightened and prolonged. For after we are a little relieved, we can bear to return to the terrible, which is heightened by contrast with the beautiful and soothing: whereas we are soon fatigued, and even lose our sensibility, when we are presented with nothing but what is dreadful and distressing. It was formerly not uncommon, to relieve the reader or spectator from the deepest terror or distress by a sudden transition to the most ludicrous representations. This practice, however, has been justly condemned, on account of the painful distraction which it occasions. It is only by degrees, that we should make so vast a transition; and the objects, which first relieve us from the violence of terror, cannot be too serious, provided they are soothing at the same time.

In the fourth book of the Æneid, we have an exquisite instance of the address, which is

now recommended. After describing the misery of Dido at the approaching departure of Æneas, the awful dreams and prodigies that haunted her, the deliberate resolution of self-murder, and the pretended magical rites to deceive her sister; after all these horrors, the poet soothes his reader with the following beautiful description of the repose of night.

Nox erat, et placidum carpebant fessa soporem
Corpora per terras; silvæque et sæva quierant
Æquora: quum medio volvuntur sidera lapsu,
Quum tacet omnis ager, pecudes, pictæque volucres,
Quæque lacus late liquidos, quæque aspera dumis
Rura tenent, somno positæ sub nocte silenti,
Lenibant curas, et corda oblita laborum.
At non infelix animi Phœnissa, neque unquam
Solvitur in somnos.

'Twas dead of night, when weary bodies close
Their eyes in balmy sleep and soft repose:
The winds no longer whisper through the woods,
Nor murmuring tides disturb the gentle floods;
The stars in silent order mov'd around,
And Peace, with downy wings, was brooding on the
ground;
The flocks, and herds, and parti-colour'd fowl,
Which haunt the woods, or swim the weedy pool,

Stretch'd on the quiet earth securely lay,
Forgetting the past labours of the day.
All else of nature's common gift partake;
Unhappy Dido was alone awake. DRYDEN.

And thus, after a pleasing relief, we are brought again, with renewed sensibility, to the agonies of Dido, her despair and death.

ESSAY V.

ON PITY.

THAT pity should become a source of pleasure in composition, will not appear extraordinary after the observations which have been made concerning terror. We have the secret comparison of our own ease and safety with the sufferings of others; we are agitated with the gentler movements of sorrow not our own; our curiosity is interested with regard to the fate and the behaviour of our fellow-creatures in the unusual circumstances of deep distress, which require the utmost resources of patience and fortitude; while the charms of composition, and a variety of more agreeable thoughts and images, are mingled to soften the severer feelings. But, beside these

causes of pleasure, which have been already considered in treating of terror, there still remain two which are peculiar to pity.

The chief of them is the extraordinary height to which pity raises the tender affections. Our attachment even to a stranger in affliction is extremely remarkable, although we are perfectly unacquainted with his character. What is more; our heart is softened even to a bad man, and to our enemy himself in adversity, whatever hatred or indignation we may entertain for them in other circumstances. We need not, therefore, wonder at the extraordinary height, to which our love is raised by the sufferings of an amiable character; and that no words can express the fondness, with which we cling to our friend in his misery. Now of all our emotions, the tender affections are productive of the greatest delight, and can sweeten even our bitterest tears.

To this cause of pleasure we have to add the agreeable feeling of self-approbation, when we find ourselves moved by a virtuous pity, and impressed with the belief, that if we had

it in our power to relieve the sufferer, our exertions would be equal to the warmth of our emotion. This feeling may, indeed, be too often delusive; but while it remains, it is highly pleasing.

It may safely be considered as a principle in pathetic composition, that the extraordinary height to which the tender affections are raised forms the great charm of pity. It is true, that an author without paying regard to this consideration may rack our hearts with the exhibition of misery. Our pity will be raised to a very high degree by a detail of the cruelties of Nero, of the torments inflicted by the Spanish adventurers in America, or of the atrocious treatment which slaves have endured from tyrannical masters: yet it will not be said, that such are the subjects best adapted for rendering pity a source of pleasure, however proper they may be on some occasions, where conviction or persuasion is the great design.

It has often appeared to me a strange idea in Sterne, to think of entertaining his readers with so minute a description of a wretched

captive in a dungeon. The agitation from the view of so forlorn a state is too severe, to be in itself agreeable to a feeling heart; our pain is relieved only by admiration of the author's talents, and by a sort of gratification to curiosity; but there is no character, no history, nothing but pure wretchedness, to engage us to the sufferer; and that wretchedness of too dismal a nature to be exhibited by itself, although it might be endured, if it were to answer some important purpose, as to enforce a useful lesson, or to lead to some agreeable or interesting situation.

Let us then keep in view the principle, that the great charm of pity is the extraordinary height to which it raises the tender affections; and consider more particularly how pathetic compositions may be rendered as engaging as possible.

It is evident, that the character of the sufferer is of great importance.

We might at first imagine, that, if the exhibition of any affliction can be agreeable, it is only when a bad man suffers the punishment

he deserves. Yet such a principle would be directly in opposition to the practice of the most eminent pathetic writers, and to what we feel in the perusal of their works. Dr. Moore has made the attempt, and with great ability, to engage us by an exhibition of the miseries, which a very wicked man brought upon himself: yet we turn with distaste from the sufferings of Zeluco, but follow with unwearied interest the sorrows of the angelic Clementina, and even the anguish, though it is by far too severe an agitation, of the amiable Clarissa. It is true, that we do not wish the amiable or the virtuous to be afflicted; but, when they are afflicted, we know that their sufferings attach us to them with an interest far beyond what their prosperity could have inspired. And, after what has been observed concerning the power of imagination, we can easily conceive to what a height pathetic compositions may raise not only our pity for such characters, but also the tender affections, which are naturally awakened by pity, and constitute its principal attraction.

It may perhaps be supposed, that such representations must be unfavourable to virtue, and subversive of our ideas of the justice and goodness of Providence. But it is to be remembered, that, in reality, the worthiest characters are subject, as well as the wicked, to the calamities of life; that deep afflictions fall, at times, to their lot; and, on some occasions, their virtues themselves are the cause of their sufferings. And while these representations are extremely engaging, they may at the same time be rendered productive of the most salutary impressions, by pointing out the resources of good men in adversity, by warning us of the vicissitudes to which we are exposed, and by raising our thoughts to a better world.

I proceed then to observe, that an amiable character in the sufferer has the finest effect. An amiable character is to be understood as opposed not merely to what is wicked and hateful, but also to those characters, which command our respect or admiration, but do not so particularly engage our love. Here a double effect is produced. For, in the first

place, our pity is raised to the greatest height, not only because affection makes us long for the happiness of its object, but also because it softens the heart, so as to render it peculiarly susceptible of pity. And, on the other hand, the painful feelings are very intimately blended with the delights of affection.

But, although our compassion for Belvidera, or Lady Randolph, be far more captivating than what is produced by the sufferings of Socrates or Cato, yet the exhibition of heroic fortitude in the midst of distress is both instructive, sublime, and interesting. The thrillings of the tender affections are not, indeed, felt in the same degree as in the former case; but on the other hand, we have the elevating emotions of the sublime, to blend with our commiseration and relieve its pain. Yet the interest will be incomparably greater, if, while the heroic virtue of the sufferer commands our admiration, he appears under the influence of the kind affections, as with the tenderness of a friend, a lover, a husband, a son, or a father.

Otway, whose powers in the pathetic are very uncommon, has miserably neglected the effect of character in the case of Jaffier and Pierre. The former we despise; the latter we detest: and hence we are not only the less interested in their fortunes; but the interest, which by the talents of the poet we are forced to take, is reluctant and unpleasing. On the other hand, the virtuous and amiable Belvidera has the full command of our affections and pity.

Homer also, but perhaps designedly, has, by neglecting the effect of character, weakened not a little the impression, which a poet of far lower abilities might have produced, in one of the most interesting parts of the Iliad, the death of Hector. Although Hector is represented in some other parts of the poem, not only as the bravest of the Trojans, but also as a fond parent, an affectionate husband, and an attentive and respectful son; yet at his last appearance, when he ought to have been set out to the greatest advantage, he sinks far below the elevation, which he formerly, though

indeed not every where, maintained. If Homer had upon this occasion exerted the pathetic powers which he displays in the interview with Andromache, and in Priam's supplication to Achilles, how highly might he have raised both our admiration and affection for Hector by representing his struggles between honour and filial love, when his aged parents besought him to remain within the walls. But there is not a word of this. When Priam entreated him in the most affecting manner, and tore his gray hairs in agony, we are only told, that "he did not persuade Hector."

> Ἠ ῥ' ὁ γερων, πολιας δ' αρ ἀνα τριχας ἑλκετο χερσι
> Τιλλων εκ κεφαλης· ὐδ' Ἑκτορι θυμον ἐπειθε.*

The same expression is repeated after his mother's supplications.

> Ὡς τω γε κλαιοντε προσαυδητην φιλον ὑιον
> Πολλα λισσομενω, ὐδ' Ἑκτορι θυμον επειθον.

It may be said, perhaps, that this seeming in-

* Il. l. 22. v. 77.

difference to his parents is sufficiently accounted for, by what we are told in the very next line, that he was waiting for Achilles, with the rage of a serpent resolved to defend its covert. But it would have given us a higher idea of his firmness in danger, as well as of his sensibility, if he had endeavoured to comfort his parents in their anguish, and reminded them how his honour and duty demanded, that he should stand forth in the defence of his family and country. A long formal speech might indeed have been improper; but a few words could have conveyed these sentiments both in the most affectionate and forcible manner, and interested us far more in his fate.

But the matter does not rest here: for we find by Hector's soliloquy, which follows immediately, that what engaged his mind and prevented him from attending to the entreaties of his parents, was a struggle not between affection and honour, but between shame and fear. He bewails himself, that he cannot take

refuge within the walls, without being reproached for his obstinacy in not listening to Polydamas, who had advised him, on the appearance of Achilles, to lead the Trojans back into the city. He entertains some thoughts of laying aside his arms, and meeting his adversary in a peaceable manner, to propose terms of accommodation; and these terms were to be abundantly humiliating to the Trojans: not only the restoration of Helen with all her possessions, but also the half of the whole wealth of Troy. But then he suspects, that the experiment would be dangerous, as Achilles might be ungenerous enough to take advantage of his helpless condition, and kill him; for he does not think, he says, that his enemy would allow the conversation to go on like that which passes between a young maid and her lover. So that, upon the whole, he concludes it to be better to take his chance of the combat. Now it cannot surely be considered as improbable, that Hector, the bulwark of Troy, the favourite of his country, and the adversary of Achilles, should have possessed on

this occasion both greater magnanimity, and a greater concern for all that could be sacred or dear to him.

But the worst follows. For, as if the poet had been anxious to diminish the sympathy of his readers, and even the glory of Achilles, as much as possible, Hector is represented as unable to bear his approach, seized with a fit of trembling, and actually running away under the very eyes of his countrymen. He is even compared to a timorous dove flying from a hawk; and the poet observes, that he might well run fast, for he was running not for a prize, but for his life. Nor does the Trojan hero think of stopping, till Minerva appears in the shape of his brother Deiphobus, and promises to stand by him, if he would face Achilles.

Whether Hector's flight was a tradition, which Homer could neither contradict nor omit, is what we pretend not to determine. But it is evident, that Achilles would have obtained more honour from his victory, if he had contended with a more determined adversary; and also,

which is what concerns our present purpose, our compassion for Hector's untimely fate would have been both higher and more engaging, if he had appeared more magnanimous and kinder-hearted.

Homer conducts the matter very differently, when our attention is to be called to the death of Patroclus. Although this hero is represented with the most determined courage, yet he is not only free from sternness, but has a heart overflowing with tenderness for his companions, when he saw them reduced to the last extremity by the Trojans, who had forced their way within the ramparts, and were setting fire to the ships. The sixteenth book opens at this juncture with a scene between Achilles and Patroclus; Patroclus weeping bitterly, and Achilles inquiring kindly, though perhaps too playfully, into the cause of his tears.

> Τον δε βαρυστεναχων προσεφης, Πατροκλεις ἱππευ·
> Ὠ Αχιλευ, Πηλεος ὑιε, μεγα φερτατ' Ἀχαιων,
> Μη νεμεσα· τοιον γαρ ἀχος βεβιηκεν Ἀχαιους.
> Ὁι μεν γαρ δη παντες, ὁσοι παρος ἠσαν ἀριστοι,
> Ἐν νηυσιν κειαται βεβλημενοι οὐταμενοι τε.
> Βεβληται μεν ὁ Τυδειδης κρατερος Διομηδης·

'Ουτάςαι δ' 'Οδυσευς δουρικλυτος, ἠδ' Αγαμεμνων·
Βεβληται δε και 'Ευρυπυλος κατα μηρον ὀϊςῳ.
Τους μεντ' ἰητροι πολυφαρμακοι ἀμφιπενονται
'Ελκἐ ἀκειομενοι· συ δ' ἀμηχανος ἐπλευ, Αχιλλευ.
Μη ἐμε γουν ουτος γε λαβοι χολος, ὁν συ φυλασσεις,
'Αιναρετη. Τις σευ ἀλλος ὀνησεται ὀψιγονος περ,
'Αικε μη 'Αργειοισιν ἀεικεα λοιγον ἀμυνῃς;
Νηλεες, ουκ ἀρα σοι γε πατηρ ἠν ἱπποτα Πηλευς,
'Ουδε Θετις μητηρ· γλαυκη δε σε τικτε θαλασσα
Πετραι τ' ἠλιβατοι, ὁτι τοι νοος ἐςιν ἀπηνης.
'Ει δε τινα φρεσι σῃσι θεοπροπιην ἀλεεινεις,
Και τινα τοι παρ Ζηνος επεφραδε ποτνια μητηρ.
'Αλλ' ἐμε περ προες ὠχ', ἁμα δ' ἀλλον λαον ὀπασσον
Μυρμιδονων, ἠν που τι φοως Δαναοισι γενωμαι.*

A sigh that instant from his bosom broke,
Another follow'd, and Patroclus spoke:
Let Greece at length with pity touch thy breast,
Thyself a Greek, and once of Greeks the best!
Lo! ev'ry chief, that might her fate prevent,
Lies pierc'd with wounds and bleeding in his tent.
Eyrypylus, Tydides, Atreus' son
And wise Ulysses, at the navy groan,
More for their country's wounds than for their own.
Their pain soft arts of pharmacy can ease,
Thy breast alone no lenitives appease.
May never rage like thine my soul enslave,
O great in vain, unprofitably brave!
Thy country slighted in her last distress,
What friend, what man, from thee shall hope redress?

* Il. l. 16. v. 20.

No;—men unborn, and ages yet behind,
Shall curse that fierce, that unforgiving mind.
*   *   *   *   *   *   *   *   *   *
If some dire oracle thy breast alarm,
If aught from Jove, or Thetis, stop thy arm,
Some beam of comfort yet on Greece may shine,
If I but lead the Myrmidonian line. POPE.

We cannot but be particularly interested for him, who thus ventured to upbraid Achilles for his unrelenting spirit; and, while he might have remained in safety with his dearest friend, yet, with not less kindness than resolution, insisted upon sharing the fate of his companions. But the well known episode of Nisus and Euryalus, in the ninth book of the Æneid, is one of the finest examples to show, how captivating is our pity for the sorrows of those, who unite the tender affections with heroic valour.

It is not meant, that the sufferings of bad men ought never to be represented in compositions, whose great object is to please. For these sufferings may not only enforce some useful lesson, but also form a necessary part of

a story. Besides, the indignation raised by the view of wicked characters, although it ought not to be the prevailing emotion in such compositions, may yet have an excellent effect, like discords in music, both to diversify the composition, to rouse the attention, and to increase, by contrast, the influence of gentler and more engaging passions. As the sufferings of bad men, however, cannot produce the affectionate interest, which is the great charm of pathetic composition, they ought to be held up as objects of terror rather than of sympathy.

This was evidently Shakspeare's idea in the tragedy of Macbeth. Every art is employed to excite our horror; but we are little disposed to weep, either for the usurper or his wife, till at last our hearts begin to be softened in her favour, when we find that sleep itself, the refuge of the wretched, only serves to aggravate her misery.

The observation, however, is applicable chiefly to those characters that are hardened in guilt,

and have no respectable or amiable quality sufficiently conspicuous to create an interest. But when we see a guilty person subdued to penitence, broken down by misery, yet displaying in his last extremity uncommon elevation of mind or tenderness of affection, it is not easy to withhold either our pity or attachment. It is in this manner, that Virgil, with great address, has interested us in the fate of Mezentius. Yet he had represented that tyrant in the most odious light, as both impious and cruel in the highest degree. But when he is weeping over the dead body of Lausus, our hearts are softened by his extreme affection, his bitter anguish, his remorse for the infamy and calamities which he had brought upon his son, and his determined resolution, faint and bleeding as he was, to return to the field of battle, to meet Æneas, and to die; we lose sight of his former guilt; we think only of his wretchedness, affection, and fortitude; and in his last moments we feel an interest for him, whom we abhorred in prosperity. Nor

does the kind, but distracted manner, in which he speaks to his horse, the old companion of his victories and dangers, and who was now to share the fate of his master, contribute little to the effect.

The passage is so beautiful, and illustrates the subject so well, that it may be proper to quote it. The reader will remember, that Mezentius, together with his son Lausus, had fled from his subjects, who had threatened the lives of both on account of the cruelties of the father: and that Mezentius was wounded by Æneas in battle, but had found means to retire by his son's interposition. Lausus, engaging too rashly, was slain by Æneas, who orders the body to be carried with every mark of honour to his father.

Interea genitor Tiberini ad fluminis undam
Volnera siccabat lymphis, corpusque levabat
Arboris acclinis trunco. Procul ærea ramis
Dependet galea, et prato gravia arma quiescunt.
Stant lecti circum juvenes: ipse æger, anhelans,
Colla fovet, fusus propexam in pectore barbam:
Multa super Lauso rogitat, multosque remittit
Qui revocent, mœstique ferant mandata parentis.
At Lausum socii exanimem super arma ferebant

Flentes, ingentem atque ingenti volnere victum.
Agnovit longe gemitum præsaga mali mens.
Canitiem multo deformat pulvere, et ambas
Ad cœlum tendit palmas, et corpore inhæret:
Tantane me tenuit vivendi, nate, voluptas,
Ut pro me hostili paterer succedere dextræ
Quem genui? Tuane hæc genitor per volnera servor,
Morte tuâ vivens? Heu! nunc misero mihi demum
Exilium infelix, nunc alte volnus adactum.
Idem ego, nate, tuum maculavi crimine nomen,
Pulsus ob invidiam solio, sceptrisque paternis.
Debueram patriæ pœnas odiisque meorum:
Omnis per mortes animam sontem ipse dedissem.
Nunc vivo; neque adhuc homines lucemque relinquo.
Sed linquam. Simul, hoc dicens, adtollit in ægrum
Se femur; et quanquam vis alto volnere tardat,
Haud dejectus, equum duci jubet. Hoc decus illi,
Hoc solamen erat: bellis hoc victor abibat
Omnibus. Adloquitur mœrentem, et talibus infit:
Rhœbe, diu (res siqua diu mortalibus ulla est)
Viximus. Aut hodie victor spolia illa cruenta,
Et caput Æneæ, referes; Lausique dolorum
Ultor eris mecum: aut, aperit si nulla viam vis,
Occumbes pariter. Neque enim, fortissime, credo
Jussa aliena pati, et dominos dignabere Teucros.
Dixit; et exceptus tergo consueta locavit
Membra, manusque ambas jaculis oneravit acutis,
Ære caput fulgens, cristaque hirsutus equina.
Sic cursum in medios rapidus dedit. Æstuat ingens
Imo in corde pudor mixtoque insania luctu.*

* Æn. l. 10, v. 833.

Mean-time his father, now no father, stood
And wash'd his wounds by Tiber's yellow flood,
Oppress'd with anguish, panting, and o'erspent,
His fainting limbs against an oak he leant;
A bough his brazen helmet did sustain;
His heavier arms lay scatter'd on the plain;
A chosen train of youth around him stand;
His drooping head was rested on his hand;
His grisly beard his pensive bosom sought;
And all on Lausus ran his restless thought.
Careful, concern'd his danger to prevent,
He much inquir'd, and many a message sent
To warn him from the field: alas! in vain;
Behold his mournful followers bear him slain:
O'er his broad shield still gush'd the yawning wound,
And drew a bloody trail along the ground.
Far off he heard their cries; far off divin'd
The dire event with a foreboding mind.
With dust he sprinkled first his hoary head,
Then both his lifted hands to Heav'n he spread;
Last the dear corpse embracing, thus he said:
What joys, alas! could this frail being give,
That I have been so covetous to live?
To see my son, and such a son, resign
His life a ransom for preserving mine?
And am I then preserv'd, and art thou lost?
How much too dear has that redemption cost!
'Tis now my bitter banishment I feel;
This is a wound too deep for time to heal.
My guilt thy growing virtues did defame,
My blackness blotted thy unblemish'd name.
Chas'd from a throne, abandon'd and exil'd
For foul misdeeds, were punishments too mild.

I ow'd my people these, and from their hate,
With less resentment could have borne my fate.
" 'Twas I that sinn'd, 'twas I that should have died
" A thousand deaths; not thou, my hope! my pride!"*
And yet I live, and yet sustain the sight
Of hated men, and of more hated light;
But will not long. With that he rais'd from ground
His fainting limbs, that stagger'd with his wound;
Yet, with a mind resolv'd and unappall'd
With pains or perils, for his courser call'd,
Well mouth'd, well manag'd, whom himself did dress
With daily care, and mounted with success,
His aid in arms, his ornament in peace.
Soothing his courage with a gentle stroke,
The steed seem'd sensible, while thus he spoke:
O Rhœbus! we have liv'd too long for me,
If life and long were terms that could agree:
This day, thou either shalt bring back the head
And bloody trophies of the Trojan dead;
This day, thou either shalt revenge my woe
For murder'd Lausus on his cruel foe;
Or, if inexorable fate deny
Our conquest, with thy conquer'd master die;
For after such a lord, I rest secure
Thou wilt no foreign reins, or Trojan load endure.
He said: and straight the officious courser kneels
To take his wonted weight: his hand he fills

* I have ventured to insert these two lines, on account of the verse,

Omnis per mortes animam sontem ipse dedissem,

which Dryden seems to have overlooked.

With pointed javelins: on his head he lac'd
His glittering helm, which terribly was grac'd
With waving horse-hair nodding from afar:
Then spurr'd his thundering steed amidst the war.
Love, anguish, wrath, and grief to madness wrought,
Despair, and secret shame, and conscious thought
Of inborn worth his labouring soul oppress'd,
Roll'd in his eyes, and rag'd within his breast.

DRYDEN.

But, although in this passage a great effect is produced by the poet's address in presenting only what was favourable in the conduct or feelings of Mezentius, yet our interest would have been far higher, if his former crimes had not been so atrocious, and so inconsistent with a worthy or amiable character.

It is proper, however, to distinguish between a person essentially and habitually depraved, and one, who has been led to the commission of a crime by an unfortunate concurrence of circumstances, or driven to it by the phrensy of a moment. A good man may fall into a situation of this kind; and the representation may be rendered both pathetic and interesting, and instructive also, in a very high degree. But

this matter belongs to that part of our inquiry, to which we now proceed; namely, what are the distressful situations most proper for compositions, whose object is to please.

Here the first place will be given to those sufferings which arise from the tender affections; as, when two lovers are torn asunder by death, or by disaster; or, when a parent bewails the loss or the calamity of his child. We not only love the sufferer for his kindness, but his kindness itself is communicated to us by sympathy; and we also feel the cordial affection, which may be supposed to animate the object of his kindness. Here, then, is the directest road to our hearts; and such are the most engaging forms of pity.

This is beautifully exemplified by Virgil, when Nisus offers himself in vain as a ransom for his friend, and expires on the dead body of him, whom he could not save:

> Tum super exanimem sese projecit amicum
> Confossus, placidaque ibi demum morte quievit.*

* Æneid, l. 9. v. 444.

Consider also how we are captivated by the hapless story of Sigismunda, who fell a victim to the innocent and virtuous love, which had so lately before been the charm of her life. Our pain is relieved by the affection which soothed her own breast, when she says to her lover as she was expiring,

> It sheds a sweetness through my fate
> That I am thine again, and without blame
> May in my Tancred's arms resign my soul.

And with how tender an interest do we attach ourselves to Lady Randolph, when she thus gives way to the inconsolable anguish, which arose from conjugal and maternal affection:

> My son, my son,
> My beautiful, my brave! how proud was I
> Of thee and of thy valour! my fond heart
> O'erflow'd this day with transport, when I thought
> Of growing old amidst a race of thine,
> Who might make up to me their father's childhood,
> And bear my brother's and my husband's name.
> Now all my hopes are dead. A little while
> Was I a wife; a mother not so long;
> What am I now?

In the distresses which we are at present

considering, it is peculiarly interesting, when the suffering arises from the struggle of the tender affections with duty and honour. Under this description, however, we are far from comprehending the extravagant and brutal actions, where these most amiable and best feelings of our nature are outraged without necessity. Such was the conduct of the elder Brutus, who with officious barbarity thought proper, not only to condemn personally his own sons to death, but also to witness their execution. The case is still worse, when guilt is added to brutality, even although these unhallowed means should be presumptuously employed in the speculation of public good. Such, upon the most favourable supposition, was the conduct of the younger Brutus, who with his own hand assassinated his friend; the friend, too, with whom he lived to the last in habits of familiarity. Although Voltaire has composed tragedies on the two subjects, which we have mentioned, yet it must be acknowledged, that the attempt to excite our pity and attachment to characters like these is in very bad taste, as well as highly

improper in other respects. In fact, such characters must either possess the tender affections in a very low degree; or else, their affections are subdued by principles, with which we cannot sympathize. We naturally shrink from the person, who talks of virtue when he imbrues his hand in the blood of his child or his friend. We naturally abhor the principles, more especially if they be arrayed with honourable appellations, which prompt to deliberate cruelty and deliberate guilt. At the same time, we must pity the innocent and well-intentioned, who have been artfully perverted, by false principles assuming the venerable names of religion, duty, or honour, to violate the most sacred affections of our nature. And if the false principles themselves are held up to our abhorrence, the unhappy situation of those, who have been betrayed by them into crimes and misery, may form an excellent subject for pathetic composition. Voltaire has given a specimen, executed with great genius, in the tragedy of Mahomet.

But we are now considering cases of a

very different nature; those cases, in which some principle of duty or honour requires us, not to commit a brutal or criminal action, but to forego the delights, which we enjoyed or expected from the tender affections; to part with those, whom we loved the most, and on whom we leaned as the comfort and hope of our lives. Situations of this kind affect us the more nearly, because we know they must frequently occur in the common course of events. In the common course of events many a lover, at the call of duty, must bid his mistress a long, perhaps a last farewel; many a husband and father must abandon the blessings of home, and leave a joyless wife to weep, perhaps in vain, for his return; even in the profoundest peace, many a mother must give up her favourite son to pursue his fortune in far distant climes, with scarce a hope of ever seeing again the pride of her heart. Such situations are extremely favourable for pathetic composition, since not only the suffering arises from the tender affections, but at the same time we must admire the character, whose

rectitude prevails over all selfish considerations. Richardson's novel of Sir Charles Grandison affords a fine example in the history of Lady Clementina, whom we cannot but love and admire, even although we may not feel the force of those considerations, which led her to resign the lover whom she adored. But the case will become still more particularly interesting, when it is from a regard to the welfare and honour of the person whom he loves, that the sufferer resigns his fondest hopes of happiness.

As distress in many cases arises directly from the tender affections, so on some occasions they lead to calamities, which might have otherwise been avoided. Belvidera might have lived with her father in affluence; but conjugal affection prevailed, and she followed her husband to misery. "Canst thou," says Jaffier to Belvidera,

> Endure the bitter gripes of poverty?
> When banish'd by our miseries abroad
> (As suddenly we shall be), to seek out,
> In some far climate where our names are strangers,
> For charitable succour, wilt thou then,

When in a bed of straw we shrink together,
And the bleak winds shall whistle round our head,
Wilt thou then talk thus to me? Wilt thou then
Hush my cares thus, and shelter me with love?

Belvidera instantly replies,

O I will love thee, even in madness love thee!
Though my distracted senses should forsake me,
I'd find some interval when my poor heart
Should swage itself, and be let loose to thine.
Though the bare earth be all our resting place,
Its roots our food, some clift our habitation,
I'll make this arm a pillow for thy head,
With words of peace will lull thee to thy rest,
Then praise our God, and watch thee till the morning.

No view of human life can be more engaging than the exhibition of an attachment, which, instead of being shaken, is strengthened by calamity. Even when it is directed to an unworthy object, yet, if the attachment be virtuous and honourable, the sincerity and constancy, which are displayed in trials so severe, will blend both admiration and love with our pity. Virgil with great beauty represents Æneas, though an enemy, extremely moved with the affection, which prompted Lausus to die for an unworthy father.

> Ingemuit miserans graviter, dextramque tetendit,
> Et mentem patriæ strinxit pietatis imago.*

In general, the calamity will be most engagingly pathetic, when it is occasioned by what is amiable in the sufferer. For we cannot think of his misery, without recollecting how deservedly we love him; nor can we recollect his amiable qualities, without deploring their fatal effects.

It is not however to be inferred, that pathetic compositions ought to be confined to those sufferings which proceed from the tender affections. Our sympathy cannot fail to be engaged, wherever, by an unfortunate concurrence of circumstances, any other virtuous or honourable principle requires a painful sacrifice, or becomes the source of calamity or distress, instead of elevation and comfort. If virtue and honour rise superior to those hard trials, although there should be nothing in the character or conduct of the sufferer to win our affection, yet respect and admiration

* Æn. l. 10. v. 823.

will interest us in his favour, and pity will produce no small attachment to so deserving an object. Such representations, however, are better adapted for epic poetry, or those compositions, in which the sublime prevails, than where the author would subdue us to the tenderness of pity.

We have already remarked, that in certain situations our pity may be engaged even for the guilty; and here we have an important and extensive class of pathetic subjects.

The most interesting cases are those, in which a person of real goodness has unhappily been ensnared in guilt. The anguish of shame and remorse, with the despair of ever rising from his present degradation to the fair fame and consideration which he once enjoyed, are sufferings so cruel and hopeless, that they entitle him, at least, to our pity. In real life, the world, and even his friends, may sometimes withhold not only their countenance but their pity; and this not always from malignity, but from prudence, from uncertainty with regard both to his former character and future conduct,

and also from general considerations of propriety. Yet even the world will mourn over his fall, when they are not doubtful of his real goodness; his misery, when they are fully apprized of it, will not only appease their indignation, but awaken their sympathy; they will think of the dangers, to which even the virtuous are exposed in the present state, where the best dispositions may be gradually perverted by levity, or seduced by artful villany, and where the phrensy of a moment may stain indelibly the purest character; and they will pray for peace to the afflicted and contrite spirit, that judges itself with inflexible severity, and longs, by sufferings and by death, to atone for its guilt. It is evident, that a composition, which represents the feelings of an ingenuous mind in such unhappy circumstances, may be rendered extremely affecting, and instructive also.

Lillo's tragedy of George Barnwell, and Moore's tragedy of the Gamester, are both composed on subjects of this nature; and, in spite of the faults in language and execution,

which a good taste will discover, particularly in the first work, they have both of them a very powerful effect in raising not only our abhorrence at guilt, but also our commiseration for its wretched victims. In one thing, however, Lillo has gone vastly too far: we cannot conceive Barnwell to have been so completely perverted, that he should entertain the deliberate thought of murder; nor indeed is the necessity of the murder sufficiently evident. But it is perfectly conceivable, that in the perpetration of the villanies into which he was driven by the fascinations of an artful woman, he might unawares be hurried to this desperate crime. The story would have been far more probable, and its effect, both as a pathetic and moral drama, greatly heightened, if he had set out with the intention of only robbing his uncle; and then, being suddenly detected by him in the fact, the madness of shame and despair might have driven him at the instant to do, what the least reflection would infallibly have prevented. This, in fact, is the distinguishing character of the compositions which we are

considering, that the circumstances render it conceivable, that a person of good dispositions might be ensnared in the guilt. And if the anguish of remorse, and the other calamitous consequences of his fall are properly represented; then the more that the good qualities of the sufferer render him an object of attachment, not only our pity will be the more engaged, but also the lessons of prudence and circumspection will be the more deeply inculcated, and an abhorrence of vice, and a sense of the delight and dignity of innocence, the more powerfully awakened.

We have already observed, that even they, whose characters have been essentially depraved, may become, in a considerable degree, engaging objects of pity: but it is only when they are completely subdued to penitence, and broken down by their sufferings, while at the same time they display in their last extremity an amiable or magnanimous spirit. In other circumstances, the author ought to hold up the wicked to our indignation, rather than to our sympathy.

If our pity and attachment may be raised to a very high degree for a person of good dispositions, who is ruined by real guilt, it will be easier to engage us, when his sufferings are occasioned by error, by imprudence, or by some of those slighter faults to which even the best of men are subject at times; and which, though they are far from deserving the name of crimes, may yet, in certain conjunctures, be productive of the most unhappy effects. And when the sufferings themselves proceed from the tender affections, such cases may raise the most violent, as well as interesting, agitations of pity. The tragedies of Mahomet, and of Tancred and Sigismunda, are admirable examples. In the former we see the horrors into which false principles may plunge the purest hearts. In the latter, the well-intentioned fraud of the virtuous Siffredi, and the too hasty resentment of the innocent Sigismunda, give rise to the most cruel and inextricable misery.

But an author has to consider, not only what are the characters and sufferings, which will be the most engaging, but also, in what manner

he may command our compassion most effectually, as well as most agreeably.

Now, in order that we may be prepared for pathetic impressions, we should not only be brought into a serious and even melancholy frame, but also interested for the person, who is to be the object of our pity. Our attention, therefore, ought to be gradually turned from gayer scenes, and directed to those things which calm the soul, which inspire the graver emotions of love, respect, or admiration, and the gentler degrees of awe or sorrow. Not that gay objects should be excluded, but only, that they should not be the principal objects; that they should be admitted only to heighten, by contrast, the effect of those, which inspire or lead to melancholy. By our being interested for the person, I understand not only affection and attachment, but likewise curiosity to be informed of his fortune.

We have a good example of such a preparation in Marmontel's celebrated tale of the Shepherdess of the Alps. It begins in the following manner:—

" In the mountains of Savoy, not far from
" the road between Briançon and Modane,
" there is a solitary valley, which inspires the
" traveller with a pleasing melancholy. Three
" hills forming an amphitheatre, where a few
" shepherds' cottages are scattered at a distance
" from each other, torrents falling from the
" mountains, tufts of trees planted here and
" there, pastures always covered with verdure,
" are the ornaments of this rural scene.

" The Marchioness of Fonrose was return-
" ing with her husband from France to Italy;
" a wheel of the carriage broke; and, as the
" day was on the decline, they were obliged to
" seek in this valley for a shelter, where they
" might pass the night. While they were ap-
" proaching to one of the cottages, they ob-
" served a flock, which was going the same
" way, guided by a shepherdess, whose air
" impressed them with respect and admiration.
" On coming nearer, they heard a heavenly
" voice, awakening the echo with its plaintive
" and affecting accents.

" How sweet is the radiance of the setting

" sun! It is thus, she said, that at the end of
" a painful course, the soul, worn out, shall
" renew her youth in the pure source of im-
" mortality. But, alas! how distant is the
" period, and how slow is life! In saying
" these words the shepherdess went on with her
" head reclined; and the negligence of her at-
" titude seemed to add still more grandeur and
" majesty to her form."

In this manner the author has not only prepossessed us in her favour, and raised our curiosity to learn her story, but also brought us to that serious and melancholy frame, in which we are the most susceptible either of terror or pity.

The effect of contrast deserves the particular attention of pathetic writers, as it is in no case more remarkable than in subjects of pity. In fact, by far the greatest part of human misery arises from contrast. It is seldom, that positive sufferings are inflicted, and still seldomer, that they are very hard to be endured. In many calamities, which wring the heart with severest anguish, and afford to the tragic poet the most

affecting subjects, the sufferer has not to complain that he is destitute of blessings. If he could only forget what he has been, or might have been; if he could only forget what he once enjoyed or once aspired to, he would find himself in a situation, where he might still have all the happiness which this life can afford. The hearts of the miserable are broken by the cruel contrasts which haunt their imagination, and which they are but too much disposed to brood over and encourage. This state of mind is well expressed by Burns, our poet of nature, in his words to the pathetic air of "The Banks "of Doon."

> Thou 'lt break my heart, thou little bird,
> That warblest from yon blooming thorn;
> Thou mind 'st me of departed joys,
> Departed never to return.

It is evident, then, how much an author may heighten our pity, by availing himself of the opportunities which the subject may naturally suggest, to represent, in a striking view, not only the former happiness, which the sufferer actually enjoyed, but also the blessings to which he was

entitled to aspire, or which have fallen to others, whose pretensions were not superior to his own, or which but for some cruel event he would now be possessing. Thus, in the tragedies of George Barnwell and the Gamester, the distress of the catastrophe becomes much greater by the view of the uncommon happiness which awaited the sufferers, but which their own folly had rendered of no avail, except to imbitter still more their miserable fate.

In general, it is to be remarked, that a struggle of passions is required for raising our pity to a high degree. The sufferer himself, when he is composed, even though it be in the calm of despair, is not conscious of half the pain which he endures, when his mind is roused beyond its natural feeling by opposite passions contending for the direction of his conduct, or by distraction between the cruel vicissitudes of hope and fear. Accordingly, in these moments, not only the distress itself is exhibited in its highest degree, but also the agitation produced in the reader or spectator awakens him to peculiar sensibility. Lady Randolph's calm account of

her calamitous story makes but a slight impression, compared with the sympathy, to which we are subdued by the struggle of passions in her interview with Norval. We may also remark, that situations, in which struggles of this kind do not take place, can have but little to keep alive the interest or attention of the reader.

We all along suppose the greatest care to be taken, that, as far as possible, every thing in the behaviour of the sufferer, in his appearance, and in his external situation, may contribute to our attachment. This precaution, however, important as it is for the effect of pathetic compositions, has not always been observed even by authors of the highest talents. Thus, while we are extremely affected by the serenity with which Belvidera beholds the prospect of poverty, and assures her husband of her unalterable love, and the cheerfulness with which she will labour for their support; we at the same time lose all our attachment and sympathy for Jaffier, when he bemoans himself so lamentably for the loss of his former luxuries.

> Tell me why, good Heav'n,
> Thou mad'st me what I am, with all the spirit,
> Aspiring thoughts and elegant desires,
> That fill the happiest man? Ah! rather why
> Didst thou not form me sordid as my fate,
> Base-minded, dull, and fit to carry burdens?
> Why have I sense to know the curse that's on me?
> Is this just dealing, Nature?

We should have felt for him incomparably more, if, instead of this unmanly fretfulness, and frightening his wife with the prospect of lying in a bed of straw, he had endeavoured to support her by the cheerfulness, with which he resigned himself to his condition, and by representing the comforts, which his labours might still procure to them in humble retirement; where, however dreary it might at first appear, compared to their former splendour, yet habit, industry, and mutual love, would gradually restore tranquillity and pleasure.

But, although the sufferer's behaviour, in so far as it indicates his character, is not always represented of the most engaging kind, yet pathetic writers have in general been aware, how much a fine appearance gains upon the heart. In tragedies, and fictitious stories of distress,

the persons, for whom we are to be deeply interested, are for the most part distinguished, according to their age or station, by a beautiful and elegant, or grand or venerable presence. Historians themselves, in relating the calamities or death of any celebrated character, dwell with some minuteness on whatever has been recorded as most engaging in his appearance and demeanour. In this manner our greatest historians, Hume and Robertson, heighten our interest in the fate of Mary queen of Scotland, and of Charles the First.

But here a case frequently occurs, which requires particular address; I mean, when it is necessary to represent the diseases, the wounds, or the dying moments of the persons, for whom we are chiefly interested. Writers in ruder ages, or of inferior judgment, are apt to fall into the most shocking details, without considering, that bodily suffering is the form of distress, which is the least engaging, and with which we sympathize the least; that its acuteness does not depend on the disgusting circumstances; and that disgust is very unfavourable

both to affection and to pity. But writers of a better taste and finer genius feel, that this is the time for such beautiful allusions, as will not only turn away our attention from any thing that is unseemly, but also bring forward to view whatever is most affecting, and render it still more attractive. We have a good example in Virgil's description of the death of Euryalus.

Euryalus falls, says the poet; the blood flows over his beautiful limbs, and his bending neck reclines on his shoulder: as when a purple flower, whose stalk is cut by the plough, languishes and dies; or the poppies, loaded with rain, droop their weary head.

> Volvitur Euryalus leto, pulchrosque per artus
> It cruor, inque humeros cervix collapsa recumbit,
> Purpureus veluti cum flos, succisus aratro,
> Languescit moriens, lassove papavera collo
> Demisere caput, pluvia cum forte gravantur.
>
> ÆN. l. 9. v. 433.

There are indeed situations, the distress of which cannot be fully represented without dwelling on unseemly and disgusting circumstances. Such are extreme poverty, and many cases of disease, imprisonment, and disgrace. But it

may be possible, to represent the sufferer as so respectable or amiable in his character and appearance, that these circumstances shall have their unfavourable effect in a great measure counteracted, and only serve to remind us, by an affecting contrast, how very different his condition ought to have been. Where this cannot be accomplished, the subject is thus far unfit for pathetic compositions of amusement, however proper to be recorded in authentic history, or in works, which aim chiefly at instruction or persuasion.

Upon this principle we must condemn the subject of Otway's tragedy, the Orphan, however we may admire the talents of the author. Completely innocent as Monimia certainly is of any crime whatever, yet she falls into a situation, which renders her an abhorrence to herself. And, although she would, in real life, be for this reason the more justly entitled to the compassionate and affectionate attention of her friends, yet her story is on this very account a less engaging subject for tragedy, as it associates, with the recollection of her very charms

and virtues, ideas of the most unpleasing kind, and by no means favourable to attachment; insomuch, that, even in real life, poor Monimia would be deserted, not only by the world, but also by the greater part of her friends themselves.

Although, however, it may be extremely difficult to command our attachment to a hero or heroine, who is placed in circumstances so very unseemly, or who is hooted and laughed at, or who appears in filth and rags; yet a writer of reflection will understand that in the situation of a person, who falls from affluence and honour into poverty or disgrace, there may be many circumstances of a very different kind, circumstances of extreme affliction, but which are far from diminishing our affection or respect.

But let the object of our pity be ever so engaging, yet, as pity is a painful emotion, we must remark here, as in the case of terror, that an author should not endeavour to prolong it without interruption in its higher degrees: for, either our state of mind will become too distressing, or the attempt will be abortive from

the languor and insensibility, which are the consequence of violent agitation. We should be relieved, however, not by objects of drollery, which are unfavourable to the repetition of the pathetic; but by amiable views of human life, by the display of the tender affections, which will not only sooth our distress, but likewise soften our hearts, and render us easily subdued when the violence of sorrow returns. What is sublime or beautiful in external objects may also be employed with the best effect. From the dismay and anguish of our fellow-creatures we gladly pass to those views of inanimate nature, which sooth to complacency, or inspire a gentler melancholy: and such representations, on the other hand, form an excellent preparation, and an excellent scenery, for whatever is most violent in the pathetic.

The pain of pity will be greatly relieved, also, when the termination is happy for the virtuous. But this poetical justice, to use the technical term, although it seems agreeable to the general feelings of mankind, has not received the approbation of most of the critics. It is supposed,

that we are apt to be indifferent to those calamities, which we know beforehand are only conducting to prosperity; whereas the anticipation of a fatal catastrophe not only increases our attachment and sympathy for the sufferer in his afflictions, but even wrings our hearts with pity at his hopes and joys. These observations are abundantly illustrated by the tragedy of Douglas.

On the other hand, there are certain considerations, which may deserve attention, in favour of poetical justice. In the first place, it does not appear from experience, that we are slightly affected with the representation of calamities, when we know that they are to end in prosperity. The tragedies of Iphigenia and of the Mourning Bride are highly pathetic in spite of this circumstance, and although they are not executed with masterly skill. We sympathize with the distressful scenes of many novels, as Marianne, Tom Jones, the Vicar of Wakefield, the Romance of the Forest, Cecilia, and various others, even after we are well acquainted with their happy termination. Nor will this fact

appear extraordinary, if we consider what has been said of the power of imagination in raising our emotions. It cannot be supposed, that our pity will be checked more by the anticipation of a favourable result, than by our knowledge of the falsehood of the calamities which we bewail: yet we have seen, that our pity may be raised in certain circumstances to a higher degree by the representation of fictitious, than by the view of real sufferings.

In the next place, the works, which we are now considering, ought to be pleasing, as well as pathetic. Now, we are left in a gloomy and uncomfortable state, when we see the innocent and virtuous perish in misery; whereas their final deliverance sooths our pain, without destroying our sympathy, during the course of the eventful story; removes the dejection, which a melancholy catastrophe is apt to leave behind it, and even lightens the heart, which is burdened with its own sorrows.

There can be no doubt, however, that there are pathetic works of the highest merit, and extremely popular, in which the event is fatal

to the virtuous. But if the author either prefers, or is forced by his subject to a catastrophe of this kind, he ought to relieve our despondence by the prospect of that better world, where all the disorders of the present shall be finally rectified, and where they, who are the most virtuous, shall be the most honoured and happy, far beyond the reach of the malignity of man, or the inconstancy of fortune.

The observations which have been made in favour of poetical justice, are not applicable to those cases, in which the calamities are occasioned by the faults of the sufferer. Here the melancholy catastrophe may be required, to convert our indignation into pity and attachment, and also to leave on our minds the proper moral impression. For an author should remember, that, when he awakens the most serious and interesting emotions of the human heart, he is bound to engage them in the cause of virtue; and that we shall even receive less pleasure from a work of this nature, if it affords only a barren amusement.

It is indeed to be feared, that the employment of much time in the perusal of pathetic compositions, may, in certain respects, be hurtful to the character. For this frequent, but indolent repetition of the sensations of pity in so high a degree, may impair greatly our natural sensibility, while at the same time there is no call on our exertions for the relief of the sufferer, to confirm the habit of active benevolence. And farther; the elegant and engaging representations, to which our imagination is thus accustomed, may create an inattention and aversion to the more homely scenes of real calamity. Mr. Stewart is, I believe, the first author who has stated these important observations, which he has illustrated with great ability and eloquence, in his Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind.

But while we allow, that bad effects may result from the too constant perusal and absurd application of such compositions, yet it cannot be denied, that pathetic writers have a favourable opportunity of making impressions highly advantageous to the character. Of

these the following are the principal: to warn us of the miseries produced by ungoverned passions, even when the passions themselves, as love or ambition, indicate virtuous dispositions; and even when their very excess engages, in no small degree, our attachment or respect: to warn us of the calamities, and even crimes, in which we may be involved by imprudence, levity, or the slighter deviations from rectitude: to prepare us for the evils of life, which often rise from unavoidable causes, and often from the faults of others, as well as our own: to raise our thoughts to a better world: to cherish humanity, by directing our attention to the sufferings of our fellow-creatures; and thus, also, to promote our thankfulness under the blessings, and our patience and contentment under the hardships of our own situation. But it is to be observed, that in the compositions, which we are now considering, these important lessons are to be enforced, not by moral discussions, but by the display of characters, and the incidents of the story: in a

word, by example, which teaches more powerfully, as well as more agreeably, than precept. And such is the respect for virtue in every human heart, that the useful tendency of a pathetic work will add a new attraction to its other charms.

ESSAY VI.

ON MELANCHOLY.

There is a wonderful propensity in the human mind, to seek for pleasure among the sources of pain. We have a delight in the compositions, which agitate with terror, and fondly return to the tale of sorrow. Nor are we attracted merely by sympathy with the fears or calamities of others: what is more remarkable, we are pleased with the passages, which raise our melancholy on our own account.

Of this kind are all those passages (and there are none more popular), which give striking descriptions of the evils of life, of those evils, to which we find ourselves every

moment exposed. For let us attend to what we feel in reading, for instance, the following stanzas from Gray's Ode on Spring; in the first of which, indeed, a gay picture is exhibited, but only to be contrasted with the shortness and vanity of life :—

Still is the toiling hand of Care ;
The panting herds repose.
Yet, hark! how through the peopled air
The busy murmur glows.
The insect youth are on the wing,
Eager to taste the honied spring,
  And float amid the liquid noon.
Some lightly o'er the current skim,
Some show their gaily gilded trim
  Quick-glancing to the sun.

To Contemplation's sober eye
Such is the lot of man ;
And they that creep, and they that fly,
Shall end where they began.
Alike the busy and the gay
But flutter through life's idle day
  In fortune's varying colours drest ;
Brush'd by the hand of rough mischance,
Or chill'd by age, their airy dance
  They leave, in dust to rest.

Here we feel not so much for others, as for ourselves: for *we* belong to the short-lived

race, who, after a fleeting season of vain pursuits, shall be as if we had never been.

So, likewise, the following lines from Gray's Elegy remind us of a calamity, which every one knows, that he cannot long escape :—

> The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
> And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
> Await alike th' inevitable hour :
> The path of glory leads but to the grave.

Yet melancholy as the subject is, and forced as we are to apply it directly to ourselves, this is one of the stanzas, which we read with the greatest pleasure.

Horace also frequently reminds us, how soon the joys of life pass away, and how soon we must part with every object of attachment; yet these are some of the verses, which we are aptest to commit to memory, and fondest of repeating. Such are the following stanzas in the ode to Postumus.*

> Eheu ! fugaces, Postume, Postume,
> Labuntur anni ; nec pietas moram
> Rugis et instanti senectæ
> Afferet, indomitæque morti.

* Lib. 2. Ode 14.

Linquenda tellus, et domus, et placens
Uxor; neque harum quas colis arborum
Te, præter invisas cupressos,
Ulla brevem dominum sequetur.

We have farther to observe, that frequently the feelings, which are excited in us by the calamities of others, are not entirely those of pity for the sufferers. We are alarmed and afflicted for ourselves also, exposed as we are, like those whom we commiserate, to misfortune, while memory is busy in renewing the traces of our former sorrows. Thus Homer, with his usual knowledge of human nature, represents the female captives of Achilles joining in the lamentations of Briseis for Patroclus; while, in truth, they were bewailing their own calamities :—

Ὡς εφατο κλαιουσ'· ἐπι δε στεναχοντο γυναικες,
Πατροκλον προφασιν, σφων δ' ἀυτων κηδὲ ἑκαστη.

And a little after, when Achilles mourned, that his father, as well as his friend, was dead or on the brink of the grave, and that as he

himself was never to return to his country, his young son would be destitute of a protector; the old men, says the poet, joined their groans to his, remembering what each of them had left at home:

> Ὡς ἐφατο κλαιων· ἐπι δε στεναχοντο γεροντες,
> Μνησαμενοι τα ἑκαστος ἐνι μεγαροισιν ἐλειπον.*

It is evident, that the more the calamities, which we pity in others, have a tendency to renew the memory of our former afflictions, or to remind us how much we may have yet to suffer, the more will our fears and sorrows be directed to ourselves. And hence we consider as belonging to our present subject those passages, in which our fellow-creatures are represented as drawing near to the close of life, or mourning the absence or the death of friends, or suffering any other evil, which is common to all men.

It appears difficult to account in a satisfactory manner for the pleasure, which proceeds from or accompanies sorrow for ourselves. It

* Iliad. lib. 19. v. 301 et 338.

is obvious, however, that our melancholy may be mingled and alleviated, not only with the charms of composition, but also with the tender affections. We may also remark, that we are attracted in no small degree by curiosity, to learn the sentiments, which are entertained by others with regard to subjects so extremely interesting as the calamities of life, and the awful event, by which it is closed for ever. But there are likewise other observations, which may deserve attention, and which are more peculiar to the subject.

There are few persons, if indeed there be any, who are not at times disposed to consider human life in a melancholy view. A reverse of fortune, the disappointment of a favourite hope, the separation from those whom we love, or their sufferings, their unworthiness or their unkindness; such calamities will sadden the imagination, till it tinges with the darkest gloom the whole prospect of life, and its fairest objects. "This goodly frame, the earth," says Hamlet, "seems to me a sterile promontory: "this most excellent canopy, the air, this

" majestical roof fretted with golden fires,
" appears nothing to me, but a foul and pes-
" tilent congregation of vapours." " My joys
" died with thee, Philander," says Young in
his affliction :

> thy last sigh
> Dissolv'd the charm; the disenchanted Earth
> Lost all her lustre. Where her glitt'ring tow'rs,
> Her golden mountains where? All darken'd down
> To naked waste, a dreary vale of tears.*

Besides, in the happiest condition, which this world can afford, we still know the evils to which our nature is subject, and the objects of desire which we cannot obtain: and thus without any positive suffering, or even in the highest prosperity, apprehensions and regrets may sicken the heart.

Now in our despondence it is no small consolation to find, that we are not without companions; that all men are born, as well as ourselves, to suffer; that our fellow-creatures feel as we do, and sympathize with our fears and sorrows. Hence the melancholy descrip-

* Night Thoughts. Night first.

tions of life are seldom so far exaggerated, that they will not at times coincide with our views, and, while they indulge, will yet sooth our trouble. Even when the mind is in a sounder state, yet as we cannot but be conscious, that our best blessings are transitory and uncertain, and our tranquillity exposed to various vexations, those melancholy compositions, which are not absurdly exaggerated, may still be engaging by the agreeable view of sympathetic feelings.

Farther: In the recollection of joys, that are past, which is the kind of melancholy that we are the fondest to indulge, the conception of these joys renews in some degree the sensations of our happier days, and relieves with its brighter colouring the gloom of sorrow. "Ah! "happy hills," said the poet in the fond remembrance of his early years, awakened by the prospect of Eton college,

> Ah! happy hills, ah! pleasing shade,
> Ah! fields belov'd in vain,
> Where once my careless childhood stray'd,
> A stranger yet to pain!
> I feel the gales, that from ye blow,
> A momentary bliss bestow,

As, waving fresh their gladsome wing,
My weary soul they seem to sooth,
And, redolent of joy and youth,
To breathe a second spring.

In real life, it is true, our condition may be so forlorn, that the contrast with our former prosperity will be extremely painful; and if our misfortunes have been occasioned by folly and guilt, no state of mind can be more insupportable. Yet if there be no shame, or remorse, or any other positive suffering, it seldom happens, even in real life, that we do not love to indulge at times the remembrance of joys that are past, though we know they are never to return. Thus Homer in the Odyssey beautifully represents Menelaus speaking of the fondness, with which he reflected on his companions, who were lost, though he found the affliction too great to dwell on it long.

Παντας μεν ὀδυρομενος και αχευων,
Πολλακις ἐν μεγαροισι κάθημενος ἡμετεροισιν
Ἀλλοτε μεν τε γοῳ φρενα τερπομάι· ἀλλοτε δ᾽ ἀυτε
Παυομαι, ἀιψηρος δε κορος κρυεροιο γοοιο.*

* Odyss. lib. 4, v. 100. "Often when I sit in my palace, " mourning and lamenting them all, sometimes the sorrow

So likewise the author of the Pleasures of the Imagination, in one of his best passages:

> Ask the faithful youth,
> Why the cold urn of her, whom long he lov'd,
> So often fills his arms, so often draws
> His lonely footsteps at the silent hour,
> To pay the mournful tribute of his tears.
> O! he will tell thee, that the wealth of worlds
> Should ne'er seduce his bosom to forego
> That sacred hour, when, stealing from the noise
> Of care and envy, sweet remembrance sooths,
> With virtue's kindest looks, his aching breast,
> And turns his tears to rapture.*

It is in this spirit that Shenstone inscribed on the urn, which was sacred to Maria's memory: "Heu! quanto minus est cum reliquis versari, "quam tui meminisse!"—a sentiment, which the Duke of Ormond, less elegantly, but not

"delights my soul; sometimes again I desist, and am quick-
"ly satiated with the cruel sorrow."

In Pope's translation,

> Still in short intervals of pleasing woe,
> Regardful of the friendly dues I owe,
> I to the glorious dead, for ever dear,
> Indulge the tribute of a grateful tear,

* Book 2, v. 683.

less affectingly expressed, when he lost the joy and pride of his heart! "I would not give my "dead son for the best living son in Christen-"dom."*

If then even in real life we often find a delight, that sooths our anguish in the recollection of departed happiness; we can more readily conceive, how the slighter sorrow, which is raised by descriptions of the uncertain and transitory nature of earthly blessings, may be mingled with pleasure, and moderated to an agreeable agitation.

But there is another remark, which deserves particular attention, although it may at first appear somewhat paradoxical: that our life and blessings are greatly endeared to us by the consideration of their shortness and uncertainty.

It will, perhaps, occur as an answer to this remark, that the shortness and uncertainty of any possession diminish its value, and consequently will diminish our attachment, or at

* Hume's History of England. Reign of Charles II.

least cannot increase it. But the first part of this objection is ambiguous, and, whichever way we understand it, the conclusion is not implied. For the word *value* denotes either the intrinsic worth of a possession, or the price, which, all circumstances considered, you ought reasonably to give for it. Now the price, which in your particular situation you ought to give for it, may be very different from its intrinsic worth, and your attachment may be far from being regulated by either. You ought to give very little for the finest villa in the world, if it be situate in a country, where you are every day in danger of being dispossessed by violence: at the same time the intrinsic worth may be very high; and your attachment may be either less than the intrinsic worth deserves, or it may be so immoderate, that you will risk your life, and all that is dear to you, rather than forego the possession.

But for our present subject it requires to be more particularly observed, that the shortness and uncertainty of the possession, although they ought certainly to diminish the price, if you were

to purchase the villa, yet will not alter the intrinsic worth: on the contrary, if it were actually your own, nothing would tend more to direct your attention and awaken your sensibility to its comforts and beauties, than to reflect, that you were soon to enjoy them and to see them no more. What we conceive ourselves to possess securely we are apt to neglect and undervalue, and long familiarity impairs the sense of enjoyment. It is their loss, or the fear of their loss, which most effectually makes us feel the value of our blessings. Hence our heart is warmed even to an ordinary acquaintance, whom we are leaving for the last time. Hence although in general we receive the light of day and survey the beauties of nature with great indifference, yet how wistfully should we look to the setting sun, or survey the most common objects, if our eyes were soon to be closed on them for ever! And every heart conceives and sympathizes with the feelings of Antores, who, expiring far from Argi his native country,

> Looks up to Heav'n's sweet light, and dying sighs
> For Argi's peaceful plains and cheerful skies.

cœlùmque
Aspicit, et dulces moriens reminiscitur Argos.*

Thus it appears, that, when life and its blessings are represented as transitory and uncertain, they are placed in a light, which is gloomy indeed, but which renders them peculiarly engaging.

Here it may be said, that according to this account religious and moral writers are extremely imprudent, when they employ this topic to moderate our attachment to the present world. And I have no hesitation to affirm, that he is mistaken, who thinks to diminish our opinion of the intrinsic value of our blessings merely by representing them as fleeting and precarious. Perhaps indeed he may overpower us so much with this view of our situation, as to render us incapable of enjoyment; but the very sorrow, with which he overpowers us, affords too sure an evidence, that he has strengthened instead of weakened our attachment. And the topic, when urged by itself apart from other considerations, is employed

* Æneid. lib. 10, v. 782.

with greater knowledge of the human heart, and indeed with greater reason, by them, who advise us to

" Taste life's glad moments while the wasting taper glows
" And pluck ere it withers the quickly fading rose."

But I am far from imputing the mistake, which we have now supposed, to any of our instructors in religion and morality. They urge with great propriety the shortness and uncertainty of our present life and its blessings, as a consideration sufficient in itself, not to lower our estimate of their intrinsic value (that is to be done by other topics), but to check the dangerous exultation and presumption, which we are apt to encourage, when we forget the tenure, on which we hold our blessings; and to restrain us, even although their intrinsic value were far greater than it is, from bestowing an unreasonable price, from sacrificing our honour and integrity for so transient and precarious a possession. And the miserable folly, as well as the unworthiness of such a conduct, becomes still more glaring, when religion directs our

views to the higher and more permanent enjoyments of a future state. At the same time, however poor the blessings of this world may be, when compared with what we are invited to look for hereafter; however foolish it may be to triumph, as if we could ensure their possession; and whatever may be the price, which, every thing considered, we ought reasonably to give for them: still they have a certain intrinsic value, sufficient to make their loss very sensibly felt even by the wisest and best of men; a value, of which we are not only most sensible, but which we are even extremely apt to overrate, when we reflect for how short a time at the longest we shall be permitted to enjoy them. We survey with renewed admiration the beauties of nature, as they seem to be retiring from our view. We look with redoubled affection on our companions, to whom we are soon to bid a long farewel. "Prepare the feast," said Lord Randolph;

> "Free is his heart, who for his country fights.
> He on the eve of battle may resign
> Himself to social pleasure, *sweetest then,*

When danger to a soldier's soul endears
*The human joy that never may return."**

The celebrated painter Le Poussin understood this way of interesting the heart. In a picture of Arcadian festivity, he represents a tomb with this simple but affecting inscription, *Et in Arcadia ego*; "I too was an Arcadian." The effect of this object, combined with the gaiety of the rest of the scene, is beautifully described in the following verses from the *Jardins* of de Lille. The poet is advising the improvers of ground to enliven their scenes by contrast; and says,

Imitez Le Poussin. Aux fêtes bocagères
Il nous peint des bergers et de jeunes bergères,
Les bras entrelacés dansant sous ormeaux,
Et pres d'eux une tombe où sont écrits ces mots:
Et moi, je fus aussi pasteur dans l' Arcadie.
Ce tableau des plaisirs, du néant de la vie,
Semble dire: "Mortels, hâtez vous de jouir;
"Jeux, danses et bergers, tout va s'évanouir."
Et dans l'ame attendrie, à la vive alégresse
Succéde par degrés une douce tristesse.†

Upon the whole, the passages, which raise

* Tragedy of Douglas; Act II, Scene 1.
† Les Jardins, chant 4eme.

our melancholy on our own account, may yet be extremely engaging; not only by a certain gratification of curiosity, by the charms of composition, or by awakening the tender affections; but also by the soothing influence of sympathetic feelings, by renewing the imagination of our former joys, and by endearing to us our uncertain and transitory blessings.

But it is moreover to be observed, that such compositions may be productive of great delight as well as utility from various topics both of instruction and consolation. The evils of life are abundantly obvious, and we are apt on every occasion, not only to recall them to our remembrance, but to crowd them all into one gloomy picture, while we overlook the comforts, with which they are mingled, and the happy purposes, for which they were ordained. Now while the author indulges our propensity to melancholy views, he may at the same time afford us much permanent pleasure, as well as real advantage, by connecting in our imagination the evils of life with the most salutary, soothing, and encouraging reflections.

It will now be more obvious in what manner such compositions ought to be conducted. And here we may remark in general, that the author may either confine himself to remind us of the shortness and uncertainty of life and its blessings: or he may also represent how much we have to suffer and how little to enjoy, and alarm us with the apprehension of the more dreadful calamities, to which we are exposed.

The first of these topics affords ample opportunity to delight the imagination with the most engaging objects, and to warm the heart with the most interesting affections: and an author of taste and genius will be happy to avail himself of these means to render more attractive the melancholy he inspires. Instead of endeavouring to frighten us like children with the description of dead bodies and graves, he will rather represent our dissolution in a far more affecting light, as the event which bereaves us of the objects, to which we have been accustomed and attached so long. He will describe in glowing colours the beauties of nature and the other charms of life; at the

same time that he is to exhibit them more particularly as passing rapidly away from us, and ready every moment to vanish from our sight,—which is the secret for renewing our attachment to our most ordinary blessings.

Thus Horace in the ode to Torquatus* charms our fancy with the picture of Nature's revival in the spring, while at the same time he is reminding us, that the vicissitudes of the year should warn us of our approach to the period of life.

> Diffugere nives, redeunt jam gramina campis,
> Arboribusque comæ:
> Mutat terra vices, et decrescentia ripas
> Flumina prætereunt:
> Gratia cum nymphis geminisque sororibus audet
> Ducere nuda choros.
> Immortalia ne speres monet annus, et almum
> Quæ rapit hora diem.
> Frigora mitescunt Zephyris, ver proterit æstas
> Interitura, simul
> Pomifer autumnus fruges effuderit, et mox
> Bruma recurrit iners.
> Damna tamen celeres reparant cœlestia lunæ;
> Nos, ubi decidimus

* Lib. 4. Ode 7.

Quo pius Æneas, quo dives Tullus et Ancus,
Pulvis et umbra sumus.
Quis scit an adjiciant hodiernæ crastina summæ
Tempora Di superi?

The cheerless glare of snow is past,
And rising verdure smiles around;
The spreading trees rejoice at last
With foliage crown'd.

Again the Earth renews her youth,
More sweetly shines the genial sky,
And purer streams, whose murmurs sooth,
Flow gently by.

The nymphs and graces o'er the mead
Can venture now in light attire,
To join the frolic dance, or lead
The warbling choir.

Yet joys immortal are not here;
'Tis but the season's transient bloom.
We too shall fade: the changeful year
Forebodes our doom.

Now yields the cold to Zephyr's reign;
The lovely spring will also fly,
And summer burn the russet plain,
But soon to die,

When Autumn, to poor mortals kind,
Strews with his annual fruits the ground;
Then dreary Winter close behind
Completes the round.

Yet still the circling moons pursue
The rapid course, which late they ran,
The youth of nature to renew;
But, hapless man!

When we shall lie, as soon we must,
Where all the good and great are laid,
Our glory turns to mouldering dust
And empty shade.

Who knows how soon the gods decree,
To close the joys that now invite?
To-day is ours; but shall we see
To-morrow's light?

So likewise Dr. Beattie, in his poem entitled the Hermit, while he mourns over the vanity of human life, amuses our fancy with the most beautiful images.

Now gliding remote on the verge of the sky,
The moon half extinct her dim crescent displays:
But lately I mark'd where majestic on high
She shone, and the planets were lost in her blaze.
Roll on, thou fair orb, and with gladness pursue
The path, that conducts thee to splendour again.—
But man's faded glory no change shall renew;
Ah, fool! to exult in a glory so vain.

'Tis night, and the landscape is lovely no more.
I mourn; but, ye woodlands, I mourn not for you;
For morn is approaching your charms to restore,
Perfum'd with fresh fragrance, and glittering with dew.

Nor yet for the ravage of winter I mourn;
Kind Nature the embryo blossom will save.—
But when shall Spring visit the mouldering urn?
Oh! when shall it dawn on the night of the grave?

But it is more deeply interesting, when our tender affections are awakened by the remembrance of the short period, during which we have been blest, or can hope to be blest with the society of those, whom we love the most. The author of the Elegy in the Country Churchyard is careful to represent this view of our situation, when in meditating upon those, who lay at rest around him, he pathetically observes,

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her ev'ning care;
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

It is obvious, then, by what means the passages, which dwell on the first of the general topics above mentioned, may be rendered both beautiful and interesting, although the author should not endeavour either to comfort our melancholy, or to repay it by instruction. But their charms will be greatly enhanced, if instruction or consolation are properly administered.

To enjoy our blessings while we may, is one lesson to be derived from the consideration of their shortness and uncertainty. Nor let it be said that it is a lesson, which we do not require to be taught. We are all too much inclined to view our situation in the most unfavourable light; to repine for what we want, instead of enjoying what we have; and, while we complain, that the season of our happiness flies so quickly away, to abridge it still more by fruitless anticipations. The author, therefore, who directs our attention to the shortness and uncertainty of life and its blessings, does well to rouse us from an oppressive and unmanly despondence at the melancholy view. And although the maxim of enjoying our blessings while we have them may be abused by the profligate; yet when confined within the bounds of innocence, it is perfectly consistent with religion and virtue, and tends greatly to sooth and enliven us, by rendering us more sensible of the various pleasures, which are scattered for our comfort in this transitory world. Such maxims too are highly agreeable on this other account, that we love the resigned and cheerful temper, which, instead

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that patient and manly spirit, which not only lightens our sufferings, but also prompts our diligence for the short period in which our exertions may yet be required. This appears to be the poet's train of thought in the beginning of the Ode to Dellius, when, by a single word, he states the argument from our mortality with an elegance and a force, which the construction of our language cannot attain:

> Æquam memento rebus in arduis
> Servare mentem; non secus in bonis
> Ab insolenti temperatam
> Lætitia, *moriture* Delli.

We have also to learn, from the shortness and uncertainty of life and its blessings, that even if their intrinsic value were far higher than it is, they ought not to be purchased at the expense of duty or honour. Whatever might be the case if we could ensure and prolong their possession, it is unreasonable to pay so high a price for what we must forego we know not how soon, and what we may be deprived of in consequence of the very means, by which we sought to secure

them. These considerations, and the high-spirited and happy temper, which they naturally inspire, are well expressed by Homer, when Sarpedon, after reminding Glaucus that it became those, who were distinguished by superior rank, to signalize themselves by superior exertions, continues in these words:

> Ὦ πεπον, ει μεν γαρ πολεμον περι τονδε φυγοντες,
> Ἀιει δη μελλοιμεν ἀγηρω τ' ἀθανατω τε
> Ἐσσεσθ', οὔτε κεν ἀυτος ἐνι πρωτοισι μαχοιμην,
> Ὀυτε κε σε στελλοιμι μαχην ἐς κυδιανειραν.
> Νυν δ', ἐμπης γαρ κηρες ἐφεστασιν θανάτοιο
> Μυριαι, ἁς οὐκ ἐστι φυγειν βροτον, οὐδ' ὑπαλυξαι,
> Ἰομεν· ἠε τῳ ἐυχος ὀρεξομεν, ἠε τις ἡμιν.*

> Could all our care elude the gloomy grave,
> Which claims no less the fearful than the brave,
> For thirst of fame I should not vainly dare
> In fighting fields, nor urge thy soul to war.
> But since, alas! ignoble age must come,
> Disease, and death's inexorable doom,
> The life, which others pay, let us bestow,
> And give to fame what we to nature owe;
> Brave though we fall, and honour'd if we live,
> Or let us glory gain, or glory give! POPE.

But the meanness and folly of sacrificing

* Iliad. lib. 12. v. 322.

honour and duty to what is at best so fleeting and uncertain, become still more glaring, when we take into account the futurity that awaits us. To this interesting prospect these views of our present condition naturally lead us, and render us more readily and deeply affected with the importance of securing a more permanent interest in a better world. And it is evident, that instruction of this kind may be adorned with the most sublime and beautiful imagery, and afford the most delightful consolation.

All the considerations, which have now been mentioned as proper topics of instruction, relieve from the painful languor and depression of melancholy, and even invigorate and cheer us under the recollection of our precarious and transitory condition. And it is in the view of comfort, as well as of instruction, that they may be urged not only in the most agreeable, but impressive manner.

To enjoy while we may the blessings which we have; to engage ourselves in the pursuits, which duty and honour require at the time; and, when we have done our part, to leave the care

of futurity to the powers above: these are the maxims, by which we should study to regulate our temper and conduct; and according as we act up to them, we shall not only be resigned and cheerful under the prospect of mortality, but also find a refuge from the apprehension or the pressure of calamities. Such is the spirit of the directions given by Horace, in one of his odes to Mecenas, for passing with comfort through this uncertain world:

> Prudens futuri temporis exitum
> Caliginosa nocte premit Deus;
> Ridetque, si mortalis ultra
> Fas trepidat. Quod adest, memento
>
> Componere æquus * * * *
> * * * * Ille potens sui
> Lætusque deget, cui licet in diem
> Dixisse, vixi: cras vel atra
> Nube polum Pater occupato,
>
> Vel sole puro: non tamen irritum
> Quodcunque retro est efficiet: neque
> Diffinget, infectumque reddet
> Quod fugiens semel hora vexit.*

* Lib. 3. Ode 29. v. 29.

Death itself, an event in some respects so awful and distressing, may yet be represented in a consolatory view. We lament it as the period of our enjoyments; but it is also the period of the anxieties and fears and disappointments and sufferings, which embitter the life of man. It removes us beyond the reach of every earthly misfortune, to that secure retreat, where "the wicked cease from troubling, and "the weary are at rest."* The poet, who indulged his melancholy among the graves of the unhonoured dead, relieves us, in the epitaph which he intends for himself, with this soothing view of our fate:

> Here *rests his head* upon the lap of earth,
> A youth to fortune and to fame unknown.

And he, who so emphatically exposed and bewailed the vanity of human wishes, exhorts us to pray for a mind, which considers death as a blessing;

> Qui spatium vitæ extremum inter munera ponit
> Naturæ.†

* Job. † Juvenal, Sat. 10. v. 358.

But religion opens for our consolation happier prospects, which give ample scope for the exertions of genius to relieve and even delight affliction itself. Beyond the clouds and storms that surround our present abode, we descry the heavenly regions, where the virtuous are called to their high destination; where their time shall be diversified by employments more honourable, more delightful and varied than the Earth can afford; where the sphere of their existence shall be enlarged by the developement of new and unknown faculties, far beyond what the change would be, if the eyes of the blind were opened to the beauties of the universe; where they shall be admitted to the society of the immortal powers, in scenes more glorious than nature has ever yet displayed in the fairest arrangements and aspects of our lower world.

Our thoughts are more particularly turned to this direction by the death or separation of those whom we love. These are calamities, which every one has endured, or at least to which he finds himself continually exposed. And it affords the sweetest comfort, and awakens our

fancy to the most delightful ideas, to indulge the hope that we shall one day be united in a happier state; and that our remembrance is still cherished by our departed friends, who wait with anxiety for our deliverance from the troubles and dangers of life. In the compositions then, which we are now considering, it is evident what charms may be derived from these beautiful and affecting topics. It is with such reflections that Petrarch loves to sooth his sorrow, and inspires his readers with so tender a melancholy:

Se lamentar augelli, o verdi fronde
   Mover soavemente all' aura estiva,
   O roco mormorar di lucid' onde
   S' ode d' una fiorita e fresca riva,

Là 'v' io seggia d' amor pensoso e scriva;
   Lei che 'l Ciel ne mostrò, terra n' asconde,
   Veggio, ed odo, ed intendo; ch' ancor viva
   Di sì lontan a' sospiri miei risponde.

Deh perchè innanzi tempo ti consume?
   Mi dice con pietate; a che pur versi
   Degli occhi tristi un doloroso fiume?

Di me non pianger tu, che miei dì fersi,
Morendo, eterni; e nell' eterno lume,
Quando mostrai di chiuder gli occhi, apersi.*

When birds lament, or when the green leaves play
To summer's fragrant breath, that softly blows,
Or when clear waters hollow murm'ring stray,
Where on some flow'ry bank I seek repose;

While Heav'n's dear gift, whom Earth no longer shows,
Fills all my heart and prompts the pensive lay,
Afar I see her answer to my woes,
In pity's sweetest notes I hear her say,

Ah! why should sorrow thus your life consume?
Why waste in bitter tears each weary night?
No longer thus bewail my early doom;
For still your Laura lives to bless your sight;
From death I rose in youth's eternal bloom,
And wak'd to rapture in the realms of light.

Thomson also has caught the same spirit in the most beautiful of his songs:

Tell me, thou soul of her I love,
Whither, ah! whither art thou fled?
To what delightful world above,
Appointed for the happy dead?

* Sonnet 11th, in the second part of the *Rime del Petrarca*, in Castelvetro's edition at Venice, 1756.

Or dost thou free at pleasure roam,
And sometimes share thy lover's woe,
Where void of thee his cheerless home
Can now, alas! no comfort know?

O if thou hoverest round my walk,
While under every well-known tree
I to thy fancied shadow talk,
And ev'ry tear is full of thee;

Should then the weary eye of grief,
Beside some sympathetic stream,
In slumber find a short relief,
O visit thou my soothing dream!

Here we do not mean to recommend, that an author should introduce all the topics of instruction and consolation which the subject may suggest. It is evident, that he is to be directed by the particular circumstances, whether to choose such as are lighter and more familiar, or such as are more pathetic and sublime; and that to enforce one or two topics, which rise naturally from the principal subject, and which harmonize with the general effect, will render the composition far more impressive, than to distract the attention with a greater variety. At the same time it is to be wished, that

he were fully sensible of the beautiful imagery, and of the affecting and interesting considerations with which he might enrich and adorn his works.

There is also great scope for the exertions of genius to those authors who would go still farther in their attempts to raise our melancholy; who are inclined to awaken our grief, that we have so much to suffer and so little to enjoy, or to alarm us with apprehension of the calamities, to which our nature is liable. But it is much to be regretted, that they sometimes allow themselves to exaggerate the evils of our situation. Human life is sometimes exhibited as a state in which misery predominates; the severer evils, which come but rarely, are described as continually embittering our lot; and the more dreadful calamities, which come but to few, are bewailed as the general condition of mankind: while our various pleasures are either overlooked; or, which is worse, represented as the means of rendering the calamities that follow them still more intolerable. In such cases, we may admire the author's talents in combining

skilfully into one horrid group all the most dismal sufferings, that are scattered among the many millions of the human race, and in which the individual sufferers find many alleviations, and many intervals of ease and comfort; we may admire the author's talents, and we may find some pleasure in comparing our own situation with such a picture of wretchedness: at the same time we shall rest satisfied that the picture is overcharged, or at least that we are not personally concerned. Or if we should be actually carried along with the representation, we are not indebted to the author, who has afflicted us so deeply with despondence and terror, and whose views are too remote from reality, to make amends for the pain by sound instruction.

Dr. Young, a poet of no common talents, with a fertile, but not a well-regulated imagination, has in his Night Thoughts several examples of this exaggerated description. Thus in the first of these poems, after raising up at once the evils of war, famine, pestilence, volcanoes, storms, fire, intestine broils, oppression, mines, galleys, and hospitals, as also the miseries

that assail us even in peaceful and domestic life, he concludes with the following passage, which displays, indeed, a poetical imagination, but where we must regret that his talents have been so ill directed :—

> A part how small of the terraqueous globe
> Is tenanted by man ! the rest a waste ;
> Rocks, deserts, frozen seas, and burning sands ;
> Wild haunts of monsters, poisons, stings, and death.
> Such is Earth's melancholy map ; but, far
> More sad ! this Earth is a true map of man.
> So bounded are its haughty lord's delights
> To woe's wide empire, where deep troubles toss,
> Loud sorrows howl, envenom'd passions bite,
> Rav'nous calamities our vitals seize,
> And threat'ning fate wide opens to devour.

His melancholy goes even so far, that, instead of a salutary warning against the dangers of prosperity, he converts all the blessings of this world into judgments, and bids us tremble at the bounties of our Heavenly Father :—

> Stand on thy guard against the smiles of fate.
> Is Heav'n tremendous in its frowns ? Most sure ;
> And in its favours formidable too.
> Its favours here are trials, not rewards ;
> A call to duty, not discharge from care ;

> And should alarm us full as much as woes;
> Awake us to their cause and consequence,
> And make us tremble, weigh'd with our desert.

Such descriptions of human life, if we believe them to be serious, may raise our compassion for the author, who appears to be afflicted with so deplorable a melancholy; but unless we are brought to view things in the same dismal light, a state of mind in no respect desirable, we cannot be much interested on our own account. It is true, indeed, as we have already observed, that the melancholy accounts of life are seldom so far exaggerated, that they may not at a particular time correspond to our feelings. But they will be more generally interesting, as well as more useful, when they are not so remote from our real condition.

The author, however, ought to remember, that in subjects which are so painful and depressing in themselves, it is still more requisite than in the former case, to relieve us by the amusement of the imagination, and by engaging topics of instruction and comfort.

With regard to the amusement of the imagi-

nation, it is evident, that in describing the calamities of life, and contrasting them with the happier situations, which either actually exist, or may be conceived, there is room for the most awful, sublime, and beautiful scenery. This is well exemplified in Gray's affecting ode on the distant prospect of Eton College. After a description, in which the monuments of antiquity, the charms of nature, and the recollections of our early youth concur to awaken the fancy and affections, we are presented with a lively and interesting picture of the innocent sports and achievements of the younger generation, which is pathetically contrasted with the evils ready to befal them in "the changes and chances"* of this eventful life.

We have to regret that the author did not exert his uncommon genius to display some of those topics of instruction and consolation which are so needful to reconcile us to this view of our condition. Beside those which have been already mentioned, there are others also of the most interesting kind. The natural and happy

* Liturgy.

influence of adversity, to check our follies; to render us severe to ourselves, and indulgent to others; to train us to patience and courage; to soften the heart; and to raise our thoughts to a better world; the ever-watchful providence of our Heavenly Father, who makes "all things "work together for good to them that love "him,"* who sooths and supports them in every time of need, and in a few years at the longest exalts them to a felicity, "to which the "sufferings of the present time are not once to "be compared:"* these considerations, which are able to brighten the darkest gloom of affliction, may be wrought into the most engaging forms of sublimity and beauty, and well deserve the exertion of the highest talents.

* St. Paul.

ESSAY VII.

ON THE TENDER AFFECTIONS.

THE tender affections, comprehending all the different modifications of love, appear in various forms and degrees, from the transient good-will which we feel for a common stranger, to the fondness with which the mother watches over her child in distress, or which unites the hearts of absent lovers. They may be accompanied with disappointment, or other circumstances productive of pain; but that they are in themselves delightful, requires neither proof nor illustration. We have already observed, that they are raised to an uncommon height by the view of distress, and form a great charm of those compositions, which engage us by pity;

and also that we frequently feel their soothing influence, even where the principal design of the passage is to awaken our terror or melancholy. In general, it must be naturally agreeable, when the author represents the amiable qualities which are the objects of these affections; and still more so when he represents the affections themselves in some interesting situation, prompting the conduct and possessing the heart. And it is of importance to consider more particularly how such representations may be rendered as engaging as possible.

It is to be regretted, that several authors, particularly among our novelists and dramatic writers, should have made it so necessary to observe, that it is in bad taste, as well as improper in other respects, to allure the reader's affections to worthless characters; for either the affections will be imperfectly raised, or the moral feelings will lose their sensibility. Yet Richardson, who no doubt wished to promote the interests of virtue, has exerted his great talents, in his celebrated novel of Clarissa, to attach us to a man, who coolly and systematically made

seduction his business, to which he devoted his time and accomplishments, in which he employed the basest means, and from which he could not be restrained by compassion for the most cruel and irretrievable misery. The novelist or dramatic writer performs, indeed, an important service in reminding us, that the worthless may possess the most fascinating charms, and showing how their accomplishments and dissimulation may gain the hearts of the inexperienced. But it is highly improper, that the *reader* should be seduced to love the worthless; nor can this be the way to raise our affections either in the most instructive or agreeable manner.

The effect is far more delightful, when our love is engaged for those whom we esteem and admire; and especially when we sympathize with affections, which are not only displayed by worthy characters, but also directed to worthy objects. We are mortified, that the amiable and high-minded Clarissa should throw away her love on a hard-hearted man, who was not only an habitual, but a professional profligate; and even in our highest admiration of her virtues

the unpleasant mortification still lingers in our thoughts. On the other hand, our commiseration for Cecilia's affliction is relieved by the most soothing and interesting emotions; a cordial esteem and affection both for Delville and herself, and a perfect sympathy with their attachment to each other.

But the tender affections are never so engaging, as when they improve the character. This, indeed, is their natural tendency, inasmuch as they prevent our attention from being confined to ourselves, and create both an interest in the welfare of others, and also an anxiety to recommend ourselves to their esteem. And it is wonderful how far in many instances they have subdued the selfishness and ferocity of human nature, and roused its timidity and indolence to indefatigable exertions and heroic exploits.

At the same time it is to be acknowledged, that as their gratification may on some occasions interfere with prudence, honour, or duty, they may become the means of perverting the conduct. And such cases may afford excellent subjects for raising our pity, and warning us against

the dangers to which we may be exposed from what are in themselves so generous dispositions. But the author has little claim to our gratitude, if he endeavours to gain our approbation to impropriety; nor ought he to expect, that we shall have a perfect and cordial sympathy with affections which corrupt the character.

Thus the savage fury, which is kindled in the breast of Achilles by his grief for the loss of his beloved friend, diminishes our attachment as well as our esteem. We sympathize, indeed, with his ardour in the battle; and we may even excuse in some degree the vengeance, which he wreaks on the dead body of Hector, since he is informed by a messenger from Heaven,* that Hector had ungenerously meditated the like insults on Patroclus; though Homer himself, in spite of the prejudices of his age and country, acknowledges that his hero's conduct to his noble antagonist was on this occasion *unseemly*:

Ἕκτορα διον ᾿ΑΕΙΚΕΑ μηδετο ἔργα.†

* Iliad. l. 18. v. 175. † Ibid. l. 22. v. 395.

But we see no longer the hero, but the barbarian only, when he sacrifices in cold blood twelve of the Trojan youth on no other account than to grace the funeral of his friend. We should certainly have both loved and admired him more, if he had spared this most unnecessary and unreasonable cruelty. And we should have been shocked with the poet also, if he had not expressly called it a *foul* deed:

ΚΑΚΑ δε φρεσι μηδετο εργα.*

On the other hand, we have a delightful example of the happier influence of the kind affections, when the deadly wrath of Achilles, which no other consideration had power to soften, yields to the tenderness that was awakened by the sight of Priam's age and misery, and by the recollection of his own father's forlorn situation, so pathetically urged by the venerable supplicant:

γεροντα δε χειρος ἀνιςη
Οἰκτειρων πολιον τε καρη, πολιον τε γενειον·

* Iliad. l. 23. v. 176.

Και μιν φωνησας ᾽επεα πτεροεντα προσηυδα.
᾽Α δειλ᾽, ᾽η δη πολλα κακ᾽ ἀνσχεο σον κατα θυμον.
Πως ἐτλης ἐπι νηας ᾽Αχαιων ἐλθεμεν᾽ οἱος
᾽Ανδρος ᾽επ᾽ ὀφθαλμους, ὁς τοι πολεας τε και εσθλους
῾Υιεας ᾽εξεναριξα ;*

The rev'rend monarch by the hand he rais'd;
On his white beard and form majestic gaz'd,
Not unrelenting: then serene began
With words to sooth the miserable man.
Alas! what weight of anguish hast thou known?
Unhappy prince! thus guardless and alone
To pass through foes, and thus undaunted face
The man whose fury has destroy'd thy race!

POPE.

Although it be sullied with some marks of the barbarity of the times, it is not easy to conceive a more pleasing picture than what is exhibited in this part of the Iliad, Achilles entertaining so kindly the father of Hector, and so gently endeavouring to sooth his affliction.

Here we have an example of ferocity subdued by tenderness. But it is still more delightful to observe the kind affections awakening the sublimer virtues, and supporting even the

* Iliad. l. 24. v. 515.

weaker and more timid sex in sufferings and exertions, which might be supposed to exceed the power of human nature. The tragedy of the Grecian Daughter has acquired its popularity from such an exhibition of filial piety; and fiction itself has never exceeded what has often been produced in real life by the unutterable fondness of a mother's love.

It has sometimes, however, been asserted, that the affection to which the name of love is more peculiarly given, enfeebles and degrades the character. And if this were true, the representation of it could never be proper, except with the view of warning us against its seducing influence; nor would it be so engaging to virtuous minds, as the representation of gratitude, compassion, friendship, filial and parental affection, which naturally prompt to generous undertakings.

Now the assertion, no doubt, has a certain degree of truth; but it is far from being true in general, and requires the same distinction as in the case of our other affections. For although the natural tendency of love is to improve, yet

it must be admitted, that in particular cases it may degrade the character. It may degrade the character, not only when it is directed to an unworthy object, but also when it so far occupies the attention, as to occasion an indolent and effeminate life; and, like every other passion, it may unhappily interfere with prudence, honour, or duty, and thus betray the unwary into guilt and misery.

Yet, although subjects of this kind represent the tender affections not only in the most unfavourable, but also in the least engaging view, they may certainly be treated in such a manner as to interest the most virtuous agreeably as well as usefully. For it has been already observed, in the Essay on Pity, that the crimes and calamities produced by those passions, which are virtuous and amiable in themselves, are admirably adapted for pathetic compositions: and the slighter follies and inconveniences into which they lead the thoughtless, are fair and useful topics for humorous writers. But the elegiast, who, like Tibullus, or his imitator, Hammond, would represent it as wisdom and

virtue to devote our life to dalliance; or the novelist, who, like Rousseau, would fascinate us into the approbation of a disgraceful intercourse, must either fail to gain our sympathy, or must gain it at the expense of our better feelings. And we have to regret, that the ill-directed talents of this extraordinary man were not rather employed to connect love in our imagination with that improvement of character, which it will naturally produce in virtuous minds.

This improvement arises in the first place from the anxiety of the lovers to recommend themselves to each other's esteem. In the days of chivalry, the warriors were animated to the most daring exploits, by the hope of acquiring or deserving the approbation of the ladies.—Even in ordinary life, and in the present times, when, unfortunately for both parties, the men are less accustomed to offer so respectful a homage to the gentler sex, the expectation of gaining an amiable partner will often reclaim the young from idleness and folly, and rouse them to honourable industry and honourable

ambition. In general, the higher the opinion which the lovers entertain of each other (and of all passions love is that which produces the greatest partiality to its object), the more anxious will they become to follow the conduct, and to acquire the temper, the accomplishments, and the virtues, which may entitle them to mutual respect. "Great God!" cried the brave Abradates, as he departed to battle from the last embraces of his wife, arrayed in the dress, which that high-minded but affectionate woman had secretly prepared with her own hand for the occasion; "Great God," he cried, "grant me but to show myself worthy of Pan-"thea!"*

In our own days, as well as in those ancient times, and in all ranks of life, many similar examples are certainly to be found, where the se-

* Ἀλλ', ὢ Ζευ μεγιϛε, δος μοι φανηναι ἀξιῳ Πανθειας ἀνδρι. Κυρȣπαιδεια.

The whole story, which Xenophon has told in his best manner, is one of the most beautiful that have been recorded by the ancient authors. Ariosto has borrowed several hints from it in a very affecting episode in Orlando Furioso.

curity and familiarity of the married state have not extinguished the ardour of love. This, however, is far from being always the case. Happy and secure in the possession of each other, the married lovers are too apt to forget how soon they may lose their influence, if they discontinue the means by which they acquired it, and thus grow less attentive to the importance of fixing each other's esteem. But the evil rests not here; it too often happens, that the mutual respect subsides, which once rendered each other's esteem the object of their dearest ambition. For, in a constant and familiar intercourse, they will undoubtedly discover frailties and infirmities, which were unnoticed by the partial eyes of love, or which their anxiety to gain each other's affection prompted them to conceal, and, perhaps, partly to subdue. They who appeared like angels, are found to be but mortals; and the best of mortals is not without faults. It is true, indeed, that, beside the forbearance to his fellow-creatures, which ought to be produced in every one by the consciousness of his own infirmities;—good sense, good nature, and affection,

will easily overlook, in those whom we love, the frailties incident to our present condition. But good sense, good nature, and affection are sometimes asleep; and the mortification at not finding realized those ideas of angelic perfection, which fill the imaginations of youthful lovers before their union, will render some persons unreasonably offended with the infirmities of our common nature, and perversely hardened and blind to the real charms, and real merits, even of the most amiable and respectable partners.

On the other hand, there is no situation in which one human creature is disposed to think more favourably, or more anxious to gain the esteem of another, than in that of virtuous lovers before their union. And these sentiments have not less influence on account of the restraint to which they are subjected, when the union is prevented by the imperious call of honour, or of duty; when love, though it can but ill conceal, dares scarcely avow itself; and with but little hope of any more intimate and dearer connexion, must be content to assume the name, and aspire to the privileges of friendship only.

Nor would the power of love, in improving the character, be so often extinguished after marriage, if the parties were but half as ready as before it, to overlook in each other the infirmities of human nature, half as gentle to each other's failings, half as attentive to remark and to acknowledge each other's accomplishments and virtues, and half as fearful of losing the affections of each other.

But love may improve the character, not only by rendering the parties anxious to acquire mutual esteem, but also by exciting them to great and even heroic exertions to promote each other's happiness or honour. It is well known to what desperate valour the youth may be exalted, when his imagination, roused by anxiety and glowing with desire, arrays the object of his admiration with an angel's charms. And although possession dissolves the attachment of the vicious, and abates what is extravagant in the admiration of youthful lovers, yet, while they preserve the dispositions of mutual indulgence and partiality, it will heighten the tenderness of the affectionate and worthy. Nor do I know if ro-

mantic fancy has ever conceived more endearing or sublimer views of human nature, than those examples of heroism which women have often displayed under the influence of conjugal love. I know not, for instance, if any representation can either awaken more delightful emotions, or raise us higher above selfish and ungenerous feelings, than the following relation, which deserves so well to be recorded, for the honour of the fair sex, and the instruction of ours.

It is taken from General Burgoyne's *State of the Expedition into Canada,* during the campaigns of 1776 and 1777. On the march of the 19th of September, 1777, Lady Harriet Ackland, the wife of Major Ackland, of the grenadiers, had been directed by her husband to follow the route of the artillery and baggage, which was not exposed, his own party being liable to action at every step. The relation is continued by General Burgoyne in these words:

" At the time the action began, she found " herself near a small uninhabited hut, where " she alighted. When it was found the action " was becoming general and bloody, the sur-

" geons of the hospital took possession of the
" same place, as the most convenient for the
" first care of the wounded. Thus was this
" lady in hearing of one continued fire of can-
" non and musketry for some hours together,
" with the presumption, from the post of her
" husband, at the head of the grenadiers, that he
" was in the most exposed part of the action.
" She had three female companions, the Ba-
" roness of Reidesel, and the wives of two Bri-
" tish officers, Major Harnage and Lieutenant
" Reynell; but, in the event, their presence
" served but little for comfort. Major Harnage
" was soon brought to the surgeons, very badly
" wounded; and a little while after came intel-
" ligence, that Lieutenant Reynell was shot
" dead. Imagination will want no helps to
" figure the state of the whole group.

" From the date of that action, to the 7th of
" October, Lady Harriet, with her usual sere-
" nity, stood prepared for new trials. And it
" was her lot, that their severity increased with
" their numbers. She was again exposed to the
" hearing of the whole action, and at last re-

" ceived the shock of her individual misfortune,
" mixed with the intelligence of the general ca-
" lamity; the troops were defeated, and Major
" Ackland, desperately wounded, was a pri-
" soner.

" The day of the 8th was passed by Lady
" Harriet and her companions in common
" anxiety; not a tent or a shed being standing,
" except what belonged to the hospital, their
" refuge was among the wounded and the
" dying.

" I soon received a message from Lady Har-
" riet, submitting to my decision a proposal
" (and expressing an earnest solicitude to exe-
" cute it, if not interfering with my designs) of
" passing to the camp of the enemy, and re-
" questing General Gates's permission to attend
" her husband.

" Though I was ready to believe (for I had
" experienced) that patience and fortitude, in
" a supreme degree, were to be found, as well
" as every virtue, under the most tender forms,
" I was astonished at this proposal. After so
" long an agitation of spirits, exhausted not

" only for want of rest, but absolutely want of
" food, drenched in rains for twelve hours to-
" gether, that a woman should be capable of
" such an undertaking as delivering herself to
" the enemy, probably in the night, and un-
" certain of what hands she might fall into, ap-
" peared an effort above human nature. The
" assistance I was enabled to give was small in-
" deed; I had not even a cup of wine to offer
" her; but I was told she had found, from
" some kind and fortunate hand, a little rum
" and dirty water. All I could furnish to her
" was an open boat, and a few lines, written
" upon dirty and wet paper, to General Gates,
" recommending her to his protection.

" Mr. Brudenell, the chaplain to the artil-
" lery, readily undertook to accompany her,
" and with one female servant, and the major's
" valet de chambre (who had a ball, which he
" had received in the late action, then in his
" shoulder) she rowed down the river to meet
" the enemy. But her distresses were not yet
" to end. The night was advanced before the
" boat reached the enemy's out-posts, and the

" sentinel would not let it pass, nor even come
" to shore. In vain Mr. Brudenell offered the
" flag of truce, and represented the state of the
" extraordinary passenger. The guard, appre-
" hensive of treachery, and punctilious to their
" orders, threatened to fire into the boat, if
" they stirred before day-light. Her anxiety
" and sufferings were thus protracted through
" seven or eight dark and cold hours; and her
" reflections upon that first reception could
" not give her very encouraging ideas of the
" treatment she was afterwards to expect. But
" it is due to justice, at the close of this adven-
" ture, to say, that she was received and ac-
" commodated by General Gates with all the
" humanity and respect, that her rank, her me-
" rits, and her fortunes deserved.

" Let such as are affected by these circum-
" stances of alarm, hardships, and dangers, re-
" collect, that the subject of them was a woman;
" of the most tender and delicate frame; of the
" gentlest manners; habituated to all the soft
" elegancies and refined enjoyment, that attend
" high birth and fortune; and far advanced in

" a state, in which the tender cares, always due
" to the sex, become indispensably necessary.
" Her mind alone was formed for such trials."

It is easy to conceive, that the interchange of affections, which are not only so delightful, but also capable of raising us so much above the sufferings and the fears of human nature, will prove the most powerful and sweetest comfort to distress. And, in fact, it is in the distresses of those whom we love, it is in the situations where they most need the aid of sympathy, that our affections burn with their greatest ardour. Thus our subject presents itself again in a different view, which is extremely engaging, and naturally combined with that which we have just been considering.

Racine has given an admirable specimen in one of the finest passages of his celebrated tragedy, Britannicus. It is in the third scene of the second act, where Nero, who had obtained possession of the empire in opposition to Britannicus, makes the flattering offer of his hand and throne to Junia. And here it must be remembered, that Nero had not yet exhibited those

vices, which afterwards rendered him the abhorrence of mankind; but, on the contrary, was regarded as an amiable young man, of uncommon accomplishments, and promising dispositions. But Junia, who had been already betrothed to his unfortunate rival, acknowledges her reason for declining the emperor's solicitation, in the following reply:

> J'aime Britannicus; je lui fus destinée
> Quand l'empire devoit suivre son hyménée.
> Mais ces mêmes malheurs qui l'en ont écarté,
> Ses honneurs abolis, son palais déserté,
> La fuite d'une cour que sa chute a bannie,
> Sont autant de liens qui retiennent Junie.
> Tout ce que vous voyez conspire à vos desirs;
> Vos jours toujours sereins coulent dans les plaisirs;
> L'empire en est pour vous l'inépuisable source;
> Ou, si quelque chagrin en interrompt la course,
> Tout l'univers, soigneux de les entretenir,
> S'empresse à l'effacer de votre souvenir.
> Britannicus est seul. Quelque ennui qui le presse,
> Il ne voit dans son sort que moi qui s'interesse,
> Et n'a pour tout plaisir, seigneur, que quelques pleurs,
> Qui lui font quelquefois oublier ses malheurs.

> Britannicus was destin'd for my spouse,
> When the world's empire would have crown'd our vows;
> And these calamities, which lay him low,
> His honours blasted in their early blow,

His empty palace, and his faithless train,
Wreathe round his Junia's heart a closer chain.
All that *you* see conspires to your delight;
With varying pleasures all your days are bright;
The empire pours its wealth to give you joy;
And, if by chance a passing care annoy,
All eager strive some soothing art to find,
And to new bliss restore your troubled mind.
With you the world rejoice, with you they mourn,
But my Britannicus remains forlorn.
Whatever cares oppress, no friends appear,
No friend but I, to whom his welfare's dear.
My tears are all the comfort he can know,
Which sometimes steal his heart awhile from woe.

The power of love, to support the affectionate in the most trying situations, is so great, that the very consciousness of being beloved by the objects of their attachment will disarm of its terrors even death itself. Metastasio has not gone farther than many of his readers can follow him, when he represents the Parthian prince, Pharnaspes,* who had been miserable from the suspicion that Emirena had forsaken him, consoling himself under the prospect of a fatal sentence, with the thoughts of her truth and love. It is thus that he addresses her at the instant

* In the Opera of Adriano in Siria.

when he was carried, as he supposed, to certain execution, without the hope of ever seeing her more:—

> Se non ti moro allato,
> Idolo del cor mio,
> Col tuo bel nome amato
> Fra' labbri io morirò.
>
> Addio, mia vita, addio;
> Non piangere il mio fato:
> Misero non son io,
> Sei fida, ed io lo sò.

> Though Emirena be not near
> To sooth me in the hour of death,
> I'll still repeat that name so dear,
> And bless you with my latest breath.
>
> Farewel, my love; but do not mourn;
> From henceforth shall my anguish cease;
> I thought you false, and liv'd forlorn,
> I know your truth, and die in peace.

It must be acknowledged, however, that if the tender affections are the source of our most exquisite delights, so are they likewise of our bitterest sorrows. Who can describe the anguish that wrings the heart, when the objects of our dearest attachment are torn from us by for-

tune, or by death? or when the eye, which once beamed with affection, and was the sunshine of our soul, meets us only with the cold look of unkindness or neglect? Men of the firmest minds, who could bear every other calamity without a murmur, have sometimes found themselves unequal to such distresses, and have either thrown away their life as an intolerable burden, or given themselves up a prey to melancholy or distraction.

But from the tender affections themselves, which inflict the wound, they might have derived the most soothing consolation, if they had looked for it where religion directs. For religion directs our attention to that happier country, where the virtuous shall find again their virtuous friends; and shall find them far removed from those troubles and frailties and misunderstandings, which so often, in the present world, interrupt or embitter the purest attachments. Religion even encourages the delightful idea, which we cherish so fondly when we lay our friends in the dust, that although we see them no more, they do not forsake us, but sometimes

look down to our humble dwelling, and long to receive us for their companions in happiness.* And from these views it is evident how many representations may be formed, to lull the sorrows, and even to revive the hearts of those, who have been crossed in their dearest wishes.

But a still sublimer view is opened for our comfort, in the "loving kindness and tender "mercies" of our heavenly Father. For with this most affecting character, and its most endearing attributes, the Lord of the Universe has softened the awful glories of the Divinity, and rendered his throne accessible to the children of the dust. "Sing, O Heavens," cried the prophet, in the midst of desolation; "Sing, O "Heavens, and be joyful, O Earth; and break "forth into singing, O mountains; for the Lord "hath comforted his people, and will have "mercy upon the afflicted. But Zion said, the "Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath "forgotten me. Can a woman forget her suck-

* See Epistle to the Hebrews, ch. 12, v. 1, compared with the 11th chapter.

" ing child, that she should not have com-
" passion on the son of her womb? Yea, they
" may forget, yet will I not forget thee."*—
Where then is the wretch so lost, that he may
not find consolation, if he will but listen to that
still, small voice, " Come unto me, all ye that
" are weary and heavy laden, and I will give
" you rest?" It is the voice of him who died
for our sake, of him who is higher than the
angels, of God himself; of him, whose favour
cannot be lost, but by our future iniquity alone;
of him, who can change into a Paradise the
waste, howling wilderness, and the grave itself
into the gate of Heaven; of him, who has com-
forts and joys in store, beyond the utmost
wishes of the heart of man.

Since then the tender affections may be ex-
hibited in such various forms, to contribute at
once to our improvement and delight, let not
men of genius degrade them to win our attach-
ment to worthless characters, or to allure us to
a vicious, indolent, or effeminate life. And

* Isaiah, xlix. 13.

although it is, indeed, a meritorious employment, to warn the inexperienced against the arts of the profligate, and to represent the errors and crimes into which the most amiable dispositions may betray the unwary : it is also of the highest importance sometimes to exhibit our fellow-creatures in a more favourable view, to rouse our emulation, by characters who unite the respectable to the amiable qualities, and to show (what is not unfrequently exemplified in the world) how the tender affections, when properly directed, are productive of the most generous and heroic virtues. Moreover ; while pathetic writers exert their utmost abilities to " harrow up the soul," with the representation of human nature perishing in despair, under the agonies of its tortured passions ; why do they not indulge us oftener with those more beautiful, and not less interesting or less useful forms of the pathetic, where the kind emotions are employed to sooth the sorrows of life, and to brighten its dreary hours ? And surely it is a service worthy of their highest powers, to elevate our minds to those sublimer views,

where Heaven and Earth are united by the bonds of love; those views which can support us in the worst of miseries, when our last hope is blasted, when our last friend has forsaken us.

ESSAY VIII.

ON BEAUTY.

A GREAT part of the pleasure which we receive from works of literature, arises from the representation of beautiful objects, or from the beauties of the compositions themselves. Thus we are led to consider the nature of beauty; a subject which has engaged the attention of philosophers ever since the days of Socrates and Plato.

Few speculative subjects have occasioned greater perplexity. In fact, the term *beautiful* is sometimes applied to any agreeable object whatever, either in nature or in the fine arts, more particularly if it is excellent in its kind. It is in this sense that we understand the com-

mon expression, "the *Beauties* of Shakespeare "or Milton:" and thus Akenside applies the word to every thing which it is "pleasant to "look upon," when he says that the Creator has "made all nature *Beauty* to our eye." This vague meaning, however, admits of no discussion; and we are to consider only the more limited use of the term. But even in its more limited use it is applied to objects of the most different species. We speak of a beautiful woman, and a beautiful tree; a beautiful building, and a beautiful piece of music; a beautiful poem, and a beautiful theorem. And it has not been found easy to detect, in objects so incongruous, the common or similar qualities, which should entitle them all to the same appellation.

This appellation however, in its appropriate meaning, is not applied indiscriminately to every agreeable, nor yet to every interesting object either in nature or in the fine arts. All men will acknowledge the beautiful to be perfectly distinct from the ludicrous. And it would require singular ingenuity to identify it

with the terrible, whatever may be the attractions of terrifying objects. Pity indeed would appear to be nearly related to the emotions which are produced by the more interesting forms of beauty.

> " 'Tis but a kindred sound to move,
> " For pity melts the mind to love."

But although the representation of distress must always be interesting, yet it does not always assume a beautiful aspect, even under the poet's or the painter's hand. In Milton's Paradise Lost, the farewel of Eve to the scenes of her innocent and happier days, is both pathetic and beautiful in a high degree;

> Qualis populea mærens Philomela sub umbra.*

But a different character prevails in the awful chords that are struck, in the horrid and ghastly forms that arise, when the same great master exhibits the far more deplorable miseries of the infernal host. The peaceful stream that winds

* Georg. l. 4. Like the nightingale lamenting under the poplar shade.

through flowery meadows and fruitful vales, no person would hesitate to call a beautiful object. But to apply the same epithet to a foaming cataract rushing down the craggy side of a mountain, would not be considered as a happy choice of words.

It is true, that in many of the finer sceneries of nature we may be at a loss to discover whether the beautiful or sublime prevails. And what is more, in certain instances even the most practised artist may be unable to decide to which of those two great departments a particular object more peculiarly belongs, and may pronounce it to be indifferently a denizen of either. The splendour and brilliant ornaments of a ball-room, for example, may in many cases be described as grand or beautiful with equal propriety. In fact, the same ambiguity takes place in the classifications of every art and science, even in those which are most obviously pointed out by nature, and where it is of the greatest importance to consider the classes distinct from each other. There are various objects which the most skilful na-

turalists cannot determine to belong rather to the vegetable than to the animal kingdom: yet although it is advantageous to compare animals and vegetables together, it is requisite to study separately those two great orders, between which, in all the more perfect species, we find so marked a separation. Or to take an example of a different kind: what we call the simple colours run imperceptibly into each other; green, for instance, degenerates gradually on one side into yellow, and on the other into blue; still those three capital colours are not only distinguishable clearly in their principal shades, but also on many delightful objects imprint very lively, yet very dissimilar characters. Although then the beautiful should in particular cases be not merely blended but even identified with other charms, this may not be a sufficient ground for neglecting to inquire into the nature of a quality which the general language of mankind seems to point out as a peculiar and favourite attraction.

This attraction is indeed ascribed by the general language of mankind to objects of very

different kinds. But although frequently they are entirely different in every thing else which can render them agreeable, yet I apprehend that all of them have this common quality, namely, that they not only delight, but also tranquillize; by which last expression is meant, that they produce a state of mind directly the reverse of distraction and perplexity. And whenever this effect, at once delightful and soothing, is felt from the impression of any object either on the eye or on the ear, either on the imagination or on the understanding, no person hesitates to call the object beautiful.

It is obvious however that this term will not be applied, unless the pleasure is so blended with the impression as to form but one sensation. A few drops of laudanum may compose the mind into the most agreeable tranquillity; but this pleasure results neither from the sight, the taste, nor the smell; the drug must be first of all received into the stomach, where we are sensible either of no impression, or of a nausea; and thus the soothing effect is so completely separate from any other im-

pression of which we are conscious, that beauty is not enumerated among the qualities of laudanum. It is true also, that from accidental circumstances, a beautiful object may sometimes distract or perplex even to torture; as when the sight or remembrance of his mistress awakens the anguish of an anxious, or despairing, or suspicious lover. But I do not know that the term beautiful is conceived to be applicable with propriety to any object, unless the impression made by that object, when it is not counteracted by accidental causes, have an immediate tendency to sooth as well as to delight.

In objects of sight, the qualities to which the term *beautiful* is peculiarly appropriated are well known to be the following: A smooth and polished surface, together with constant and gentle variation, without any sudden breaks or angular turns; but the parts melting, as it were, imperceptibly into each other: the colours clear and bright, but not glaring, without any distinct boundaries, but losing themselves in each other by insensible shades.

It is true, that some association of ideas may, in certain cases, render these qualities not merely unattractive, but disgusting. The ideas of sickness and disease which would unavoidably obtrude, must prevent any combination of blue and yellow from producing a beautiful complexion in the human face, however gradually the yellow may melt into the livid. But whenever their natural tendency is not counteracted by adventitious circumstances, the qualities already enumerated have been universally called beautiful, and their soothing effect, though frequently but slight, is yet sufficiently perceptible.

Here it is natural to inquire how such an effect is produced by such a cause.

That the sight of these qualities serves only to suggest a train of interesting ideas, is certainly an ingenious solution of the difficulty; and in many cases accounts, in a satisfactory manner, for by far the greater part, if not the whole of our pleasure. At the same time it may not be improper to state the following observations.

Both the bodily appetites and the emotions of the mind are very frequently excited, neither by the presence nor by the imagination of their proper objects, nor by means of any train of ideas whatever, but by causes of quite a different nature. The desire of food, for example, is, no doubt, sometimes awakened by the accidental suggestion of a favourite dish, and may be awakened in this way, when it would otherwise have been dormant, and even when its gratification would not be salutary. But it is more naturally produced, without the intervention of the fancy, by a certain state of the bodily organs; so that in this case there is not any train of ideas which awakens the appetite, although the appetite afterwards may or may not awaken a very interesting train of ideas.

In like manner a certain state of the body, without the intervention of associated ideas, and with little or no sensation of bodily pleasure or bodily pain, will in many cases awaken the emotions of the mind to a very remarkable degree. The powers of wine to enliven, and of

laudanum to sooth, are too well known and too frequently employed; yet it will not be said, that a train of interesting ideas can be suggested by the reception of these liquors into the stomach or into the circulation. Such a train may, no doubt, succeed, and increase our pleasure; but it is manifest, that this play of the imagination is the effect, not the cause, of the wonderful change in our mind.

In fact, the emotions are frequently raised by the state of the body, not only without the intervention of associated ideas, but even in direct opposition to those ideas with which the mind is haunted at the time. A man, overpowered with distressing thoughts, is not always resolute enough to betake himself to conversation, study, or business, which are the most likely means to alter the train of his ideas; and such a person has been known to try in solitude the powers of wine or laudanum: but his distressing thoughts concern him too nearly and deeply to be banished by this expedient; after he has swallowed his dose they continue to haunt him, and yet he is enlivened or sooth-

ed in spite of them. Thus the unfelt operation of a drug, without being able to banish, is yet often sufficient to counteract for a while the most interesting ideas, to change the very frame of the mind, and to render a man easy and cheerful in the same external situation, and in the midst of the same importunate imaginations which were tormenting him insupportably, or overwhelming him with despair.

But more familiar examples daily occur of mental emotions excited by the state of the body, in direct opposition to present ideas and present objects. We may be content and happy at night, and yet awaken in the morning without any bodily uneasiness, but with very acute sensations of peevishness or anger; and these sensations will sometimes continue, even although we cannot tell at what we are angry; and even although we are conscious that the friends around us, and the expected engagements of the day, and the general prospects of our situation, should naturally inspire far other emotions. This consciousness, and the conviction that there is not either in our thoughts or

in the present objects, any thing which can justify or even which has provoked our passion, are sufficient to prevent in persons of well-trained minds the absurd outrages in which the ill-tempered indulge themselves during their angry moods; yet are not always sufficient to expel the passion, nor, perhaps, to restrain us from betraying a little the state of our mind by a demeanour somewhat unquiet and less gracious than usual. But the sensations of joy and affection, which the company of our friends, and the recollection of our blessings may on such occasions have failed to inspire, will quickly revive by the application of an apparently most inadequate, though well-approved medicine, namely, a hearty breakfast. And it is obvious, that if the effect were produced by the suggestion of ideas, the temper would be sweetened as effectually by looking at the breakfast as by eating it; which is contrary to all experience. It is well known also, that a certain degree of fasting, though it is not so great as to occasion any other uneasiness, will sometimes be attended with feelings of apprehension or of melan-

choly, even when we are not visited by any gloomy phantoms, but are convinced at the very time that the feelings are vain and unfounded.

Mr. Burke, in his Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, has mentioned instances of a different kind, where the effect appears to resemble the emotion produced by the sight of the beautiful qualities already enumerated. Infants are lulled to quiet, and at last to sleep, by rocking. They are evidently soothed, and that to a very great degree, as nurses well know, by being lifted gently up and down. As they grow older, they have recourse of themselves to balancing and swinging, as favourite amusements. Most people will recollect their feelings on these occasions; as also what they have felt, when they were drawn swiftly in an easy carriage, over a smooth turf, with gentle risings and declivities. In all such cases, we are conscious, more or less, of a delightful serenity, accompanied (to use Mr. Burke's terms upon another occasion) with "an

" inward" and agreeable " sense of melting " and languor."

To these examples, which have been mentioned by our author, we may add the case of sailing, when the surface of the sea is continually diversified by smooth and gentle swells; and the vessel is small enough to be sensibly affected by the rising and falling of the waters. To such as are not sick or afraid, there is, perhaps, no situation, in which both the pleasing serenity, and the " inward sense of melting " and languor" are more distinctly perceptible. Travellers speak much of the luxury of the Venetian gondolas; and the following quotation, from the second volume of Cooke's last Voyage to the Pacific Ocean, deserves particular attention; not only because he was a very accurate observer, but also because he had no theory to support by the facts which he relates.

Speaking of the inhabitants of Otaheite, he says: " They are no strangers to the *soothing* " effects produced by particular sorts of mo" tion, which, in some cases, seem to *allay any*

" *perturbation of mind* with as much success as
" music. Of this I met with a remarkable in-
" stance; for, on walking one day about Mata-
" vai Point, where our tents were erected, I saw
" a man paddling in a small canoe so quickly,
" and looking about with such eagerness on
" each side, as to command all my attention.
" At first I imagined that he had stolen some-
" thing from one of the ships, and was pursued;
" but on waiting patiently, I saw him repeat
" his amusement. He went out from the shore
" till he was near the place where the swell be-
" gins to take its rise; and, watching its first
" motion very attentively, paddled before it,
" with great quickness, till he found that it
" overtook him, and had acquired sufficient
" force to carry his canoe before it, without
" passing underneath. He then sat motion-
" less, and was carried along at the same swift
" rate as the wave, till it landed him upon the
" beach. Then he started out, emptied his
" canoe, and went in search of another swell.
" I could not help concluding, that this man
" felt *the most supreme pleasure*, while he was

" driven so fast, and so smoothly, by the sea ;
" especially as, though the tents and ships were
" so near, he did not seem in the least to envy,
" or even to take notice of the crowds of his
" countrymen collected to view them as objects
" which were rare and curious. During my
" stay, two or three of the natives came up,
" who seemed to share his *felicity*, and always
" called out when there was an appearance of
" a favourable swell, as he sometimes missed it,
" by his back being turned, and looking about
" for it. By them I understood, that this ex-
" ercise, which is called *chorooe*, was frequent
" among them ; and they have, probably, more
" amusements of this sort, which afford them
" at least as much pleasure as skaiting, which
" is the only one of ours with whose effects I
" could compare it."

All these facts seem to be only particular cases of the general principle adopted by Mr. Burke in his theories of sublimity and beauty; namely, that as every passion of the mind produces a certain state of the body, so on the other hand, this state of the body, when pro-

duced by any cause whatever, will be attended with some degree of the corresponding passion. He supposes also (what he conceives to be evident, from the appearance of a person under its influence), that love produces a relaxation of the fibres; and on the other hand, that the immediate effect of the motions which have been mentioned is to relax the fibres, and consequently to produce the passion of love, or something resembling it. Then he completes his theory of beauty, by representing these motions to be analogous to the impressions made on the organ of sight by the beautiful qualities formerly enumerated; the swift smooth motion corresponding to the impression made by the smooth surface, and by its clear and gentle colours; and the constant and gradual variation of the motion, corresponding to the constant and gradual variation of the impression upon the eye, when the different parts of the surface and its different colours melt imperceptibly into each other.

Mr. Burke's general principle appears extremely plausible; but it may be difficult, if not

impossible, to establish it by unexceptionable evidence or arguments. His physiological observations on the effects of love are much more doubtful. And many persons will be little disposed to found any thing upon the analogy between the motions and the visual impressions. Into such discussions I presume not to enter; but would only state the following queries for the consideration of those who are in the habit of attending minutely to their feelings.

In the first place, is not the effect of the visual impressions similar to that of the motions? The motions produce a delightful serenity; and are we not in the other case also conscious of a similar feeling, in a greater or less degree? it being understood, that according to the state of our body or mind at the time, as well as according to the nature of the particular objects, these degrees may vary between complete indifference, and what Cooke has called a supreme pleasure.

In the second place, do not the visual impressions produce a delightful serenity, independently of any associated ideas, and even at

times when we are not conscious of any play of the imagination which can contribute to the effect? From what has been already stated, this will not appear to be a singular fact in the human constitution. And it is probable, that in many instances, though certainly not in all, we must consider in the same light both the pleasures which are produced by colours, and the more lively emotions which are awakened by music unconnected with song.

Thus, although Mr. Burke's account of the manner in which we are affected by the sight of the beautiful qualities formerly enumerated may at first appear too fanciful and even whimsical, this appearance arises chiefly or entirely from some of his physiological observations, which do not affect the real question, and from the manner in which he has chosen in one or two instances to express himself. But a candid reader will allow, that in the juvenile performance of this celebrated man, we may find a more ingenious and more satisfactory account of this part of the subject than had formerly been given.

The observations which have been stated on the effect of the beautiful qualities already mentioned, are evidently applicable to motion considered as an object of sight. The sight of smooth and gliding motions, which are performed neither in straight lines, nor by sharp turns, but in gentle curves, produces very remarkably a soothing effect, similar to what has been already described. This effect, indeed, will be diminished or destroyed by a certain rapidity, as rapidity naturally tends to rouse and alarm. It will be impaired also when the motion becomes so slow as to weary the attention. And the mass or bulk of the moving body, when it is such as to suggest the idea of power, will impress on the motion a character of sublimity, essentially different from beauty. But in other cases, as in the gentle winding of a moderate stream, or in the graceful gestures of the human body, and even of some of the lower animals, the delightfully soothing effect is sufficiently perceptible.

Hitherto we have considered only one class of beautiful qualities. In most cases, however,

in which we feel their influence, some other beautiful qualities are also exhibited, or some other soothing ideas suggested, that greatly diversify and improve their effect. In particular, the human countenance derives by far the greatest part of its beauty from *expression*, from expression of the feelings and the character. But we do not give the name of beautiful to the expression of the sterner qualities of a firm, persevering, ardent, bold, independent, and unconquerable spirit. In fact, however we may respect or admire these sublimer qualities, or whatever effect they may have, when united to the gentler virtues, yet, when contemplated by themselves, they are certainly very far from soothing objects. On the other hand, we give, indiscriminately, the name of beautiful, or lovely, to the expression of those qualities, which it is naturally soothing to contemplate; serenity, resignation, gentleness, tenderness, and affection.

If we attend to what we feel at the sight of a countenance expressive of these dispositions, our state of mind will appear to be

partly the effect of sympathy, and partly of love.

Sympathy has been considered by several writers, particularly by Mr. Burke in his Inquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful, and by Mr. Smith, in his Theory of Moral Sentiments. For our purpose it is sufficient to describe it as that remarkable part of our constitution, by which we "rejoice with them that rejoice, and "weep with them that weep;" and by which, in general, our imagination transports us into the situation of our fellow-creatures, and gives us a participation of their pains and pleasures, of their sentiments and emotions. Hence the sight of a countenance characterized by the milder virtues will naturally communicate some degree of the tranquillity and sweet affections that seem to bless the soul which inspires its features.

Beside the effect of sympathy, these milder virtues are the natural objects of love. And, as the love of the milder virtues is in itself extremely soothing, it is obvious that this affection, and the sympathy produced by the sight

of a countenance in which these amiable dispositions are conspicuous, will form together a state of mind so much characterized by a delightful serenity and languor (the predominant feelings which accompany the sight of external beauty), that it is natural to transfer the name of beautiful, not only to such an expression of countenance, but also to the mental qualities themselves.

Thus we see how it happens, that beauty has been ascribed to virtue. In some of its aspects, indeed, virtue is venerable, and even awful; as when it is exerted in deeds of heroic valour, in the sterner acts of justice, or in the duties of a painful self-denial. But it resumes its native beauty, when it appears in the attitude of meekness, humility, or resignation, or is employed in the kind offices of courtesy, humanity, or affection. And even its severer aspects are softened to a penetrating eye by more soothing features. Our admiration of the heroic valour of the virtuous is blended with our love of the generous sentiments that inspire it. The sterner acts of justice are re-

quisite for the safety and tranquillity of the innocent. And the cruel pains of self-denial are the most unequivocal proofs of resignation to Heaven, and are gradually recompensed by peace and hope.

In like manner we transfer the name of beautiful to all objects associated in our imagination with ideas, which sooth us into a pleasing state of tranquillity and languor; to all those scenes, for example, which appear to be the habitations of peace and innocence and love, and of minds unvexed by the turbulent and destructive passions. Such are the groves, which have not the awfulness of the forest, but which are enlivened by the warbling of birds, happy in each other, and in the care of their offspring. Such are the rivulets, which do not, like the cataract, suggest the ideas of violence and destruction, but along whose green and shady banks we find a cool retreat from the noon-day sun, while their murmurs invite us to repose, far from the fatigues and the vexations of the world.

Associations of this kind will even confer

beauty upon objects, which otherwise assume a very different aspect. The mountain, in its own nature, is sublime and awful; but when the poet speaks of

> "All that the mountain's shelt'ring bosom shields,"*

he adorns it with the charms of beauty, by throwing round it the ideas of shelter and security. The abode of our childhood and youth, although it should be such as to appear indifferent, or dull, or even dreary to a stranger, may still be lovely in our own eyes, from the fond recollection of early endearments.

It is almost unnecessary to observe, that a delightful serenity and languor may be produced by music. Indeed of all the fine arts there is none, which, in some constitutions at least, has a more direct and powerful influence in soothing even a troubled mind. And according as it is more or less adapted to this effect, it appears more or less entitled to the

* Beattie's Minstrel.

name of beautiful. It may be impossible to ascertain in what manner such an effect can be produced by any sounds, or combination of sounds, just as it may be impossible to ascertain how it can be produced by subjecting the body to particular motions, or by exposing the eye to particular impressions. But it is evident, that objects which produce similar effects of so remarkable a kind, will naturally be classed under one common appellation.

The effect of the objects, which have been hitherto considered, is directly opposite to the irritation of violent, or painful, or contending passions. But we may likewise be disturbed by the painful exertions or perplexity of the understanding; and objects that produce the contrary state of mind form a distinct and remarkable class of the beautiful.

Now the province of the understanding is to trace the relations or connexions of objects. And according as these relations are more striking in themselves, and according as the objects are presented and arranged in such a

manner as to render these relations more conspicuous, the understanding will employ itself with the greater facility.

It soon however becomes irksome, and even painful, when we endeavour to confine our attention to a set of objects, which are nearly uniform. This indeed may not always be the case when our affections are deeply interested: as a lover does not soon grow weary of contemplating the face of his mistress. But otherwise, and in so far as the intellectual powers are concerned, a certain degree of variety, either in the objects themselves, or in their relations and connexions, is requisite, not only for the agreeable entertainment, but even for the tranquillity of the mind.

On the other hand, when in any particular subject of our contemplation the variety is carried too far, either we become perplexed, or a painful exertion is required to apprehend it distinctly.

But however we may be distressed by perplexity, or by intense application, yet the mind is seldom, if ever, so much fatigued, as to find

satisfaction in absolute repose. On the contrary, while we are awake at least, it is never wholly at rest; and our situation is always extremely irksome, when we can find neither any external object, nor any of our own thoughts sufficient to engage our attention. But we may be preserved in tranquillity, and even refreshed, in weariness and pain of mind, that is to say, we may be soothed in a very considerable degree, by variety and facility in the exertion of our intellectual powers.

Hence we are naturally soothed with any set of objects which have striking relations or connexions with each other, and which are presented and arranged in such a manner as to render these relations conspicuous; provided that there be a certain degree of variety either in the objects themselves, or in their mutual connexions: and hence every exhibition of this kind will of course receive the name of beautiful.

Here one circumstance deserves to be particularly noticed; namely, the effect of such an order, as we have mentioned, in producing

facility and distinctness both of apprehension and of recollection. It is well known, that recollection depends on the association of ideas; that ideas are associated in the mind by their mutual relations; and that the associations are strong and permanent, according as the relations are striking. Hence when objects are arranged according to the more striking relations, such as those of resemblance, or of contrast, or of cause and effect, or of co-operation to a particular purpose, we are wonderfully facilitated in the distinct recollection of the whole assemblage. But the recollection of what is absent, both presupposes, and is also a much more difficult operation, than the apprehension of the same thing actually exhibited. It is evident, therefore, that arrangement according to the more striking relations will enable us to command with ease a distinct view, in all its parts and connexions, of a much more complicated and diversified assemblage, than we could make ourselves masters of, without the greatest difficulty, if it were presented in a less regular form. We

cannot wonder then, that the perception of order should be accompanied with so agreeable and soothing a sensation.

The soothing effect, however, may be considerably impaired, when any violent contrast is forced upon our notice; as by placing contiguous, or by directly confronting with each other, very lively and very mournful objects; or very glaring and very mild-coloured; or very dignified and very humble; or very great and very little. Objects of such opposite qualities may indeed have an agreeable effect, when they are introduced into the same group, and even when they are placed contiguous or in direct opposition; but the sensation of these abrupt transitions, whatever sublimity, or vivacity, or other attractions they may possess, is by no means similar to the feelings produced by what we call beautiful in the more appropriate sense of the word. And, accordingly, although an exhibition, in which transitions of this kind were remarkable, might still be soothing, and, consequently, might still have beauty ascribed to it, yet we should be dis-

posed to qualify the term with some epithet, as sublime, or bold, or lively, according as the contrasts might affect us. It will be understood, however, that objects of very opposite qualities may be introduced into the same group, without disturbing the beauty, if they are only so placed as not to render the violent contrast conspicuous, and consequently so as not to produce an abrupt transition.

But abrupt transitions may be produced, not merely by too violent contrasts, but also by the introduction of heterogeneous objects. Thus a beautiful arrangement may be formed, either with china vases, or with specimens of ore; yet it will be far from having a good effect, to intermingle the two collections, even although we might still exhibit both a copious and unperplexed variety of similar objects similarly situated.

Upon the whole, this very comprehensive species, which may be called the beauty of order, consists in the exhibition and arrangement of objects according to the more striking relations, so as to render these relations sufficiently

conspicuous, and to produce a sufficient variety, but without perplexity, and without abrupt transitions.

These characteristics are so remarkable and extensive, that the celebrated Doctor Hutcheson of Glasgow, seems, in a great measure, to have confined his attention to this part of the subject, in his general Theory of Beauty. For, with the single exception of the species which he characterizes by the indication of virtuous dispositions, he considers uniformity in variety as the universal constituent of what he calls original or absolute beauty, comprehending, under this term, every other kind of beauty, but that which he supposes to result from imitation. Now, uniformity in variety consists only in resemblance, or in some common property, displayed among objects which are otherwise diversified; and consequently though it is not fully equivalent to the description which has just been given, in a great measure coincides with it.

It is not fully equivalent: for, in the first place, it does not imply the absence of abrupt

transition; and yet abrupt transition differs essentially from the beautiful. In the second place, there may be a beautiful exhibition of objects, arranged according to very striking relations, where yet there will be no remarkable uniformity in variety. Thus we may have a lively perception of beauty from the description of a machine, when the parts are represented and introduced to our notice in such a manner, as to render their general co-operation to the ultimate effect conspicuous and easily traced; and yet no two of the parts may have any resemblance or common property so remarkable as to engage our attention.

It is to be regretted also, that this author contented himself with ascribing the pleasure, which we receive from beauty, to a peculiar sense, distinct from the other faculties of the human mind, and did not direct his great talents to consider how far this pleasure results from the known principles of our nature, or how far it is similar to sensations, which we experience upon other occasions.

Whatever theory may be adopted, the beauty

of order well deserves the attention both of philosophers and artists, as it produces very remarkable effects, even when it is not accompanied by any other beauty; and as it extends its influence from the most trifling to the most important subjects.

Doctor Hutcheson considers the regular figures of Geometry, or those which have all their sides and all their angles equal, as the simplest form in which it appears, and accordingly has chosen them as the first illustration of his doctrine.* But he does not seem to have placed them precisely in the proper point of view; for he considers the variety to be in proportion to the *number* of sides, whereas it is evident, that variety consists not in number only, but in *number and dissimilarity.* It may be proper therefore to consider more particularly what it is that constitutes the variety exhibited by any of the regular figures, and how these figures come to differ from each other in beauty.

* Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue, Treatise I, Section II, Article III.

Here a distinction must be made between the figures which have an even, and those which have an odd number of sides. Regular figures of the first kind, when the position of the centre is not made conspicuous, exhibit five remarkable relations of their parts to each other; namely, the equality of the sides, the equality of the angles, the parallelism of the opposite sides, and the equality and parallelism of the straight lines, which the eye naturally traces between the extremities of the opposite sides. And the dissimilarity either of these relations, or of the objects between which they subsist, constitutes the whole variety exhibited to the eye by any given regular figure of an even number of sides, at least when the position of the centre is not conspicuous. In the square, however, the last two relations are confounded with the equality and parallelism of the sides; so that the square has considerably less variety than the other figures of this class; and thus we see one reason why the hexagon and the octagon should surpass it in beauty.

If we now consider the regular figures with an odd number of sides, we are struck only with

the equality of the sides and angles: all the three other relations, which take place in the former class, are completely wanting; and the perpendicular situation of the angles over the middle points of the opposite sides, a relation which, before actual trial, might be supposed to supply the want of parallel sides, will not be found sufficiently conspicuous to produce a considerable effect. Accordingly these figures, if they have any pretensions to beauty, are certainly far inferior to the former class; and perhaps to most eyes they are rather disagreeable than otherwise.

The foregoing observations, however, are scarcely applicable to figures of a greater number of sides than eleven or twelve. For when the number is increased beyond a certain degree, the sides must become so small, or else the opposite sides must become so distant, that in either case the equality and parallelism of these sides will cease to be conspicuous, as well as the equality and parallelism of the lines which join their extremities. Thus the figures of an even number of sides will be reduced pretty

nearly to the same footing with those of an odd number; and neither of them will have any perceptible beauty, except that which arises from the gentleness of their curvature, and which is very different from the subject of our present consideration.

Hitherto we have considered the figures as consisting only of equal sides, and equal angles. But it deserves to be remarked, that their beauty is much increased, when the place of the centre is rendered conspicuous; or when the observer is stationed there. By this means there is brought into view a striking relation, not only of the sides, but also of the angles, both to the centre and to each other; namely, the equality of their distances from the centre. And thus, likewise, a new set of parts make their appearance; for the straight lines, which the eye naturally traces between the centre and each of the angles, divide the area of the figure into triangles, which are both similar and equal to each other. These observations, with regard to the centre, are applicable, whether the number of sides be small or great, odd or even. But when their num-

ber is even, and does not exceed ten or twelve, we immediately perceive a striking relation between every two opposite angles and the centre, these three points being evidently in one straight line; and a similar connexion also discovers itself between the centre and the middle points of every two opposite sides.

In comparing the regular figures with each other, the octagon is acknowledged to be the most beautiful; a preference which is perfectly agreeable to the foregoing principles. For we have seen how it should be superior to the figures with an odd number of sides; and also to the square. In fact, the figure of six, and the figure of ten equal sides, are the only ones which can be compared to it. But it is more beautiful than the former, on account of its gentler curvature; and it has the parallelism of the opposite sides more conspicuous than in the latter, and still more so than in the higher polygons.

In the works and arrangements of art, we find more or less of the beauty of order, wherever it can be introduced without too great

a sacrifice of convenience or utility; and we are sensibly displeased, even upon trifling and ordinary occasions, when we see it neglected by the careless or the stupid. Thus even in placing common furniture round the walls of a common room, we could not bear to see all the tables set by themselves, and then all the chairs one after another, without interruption: but although we could expect to gain nothing in point of convenience, we would contrive to mix the tables with the chairs, so as to produce some variety of groups; and to arrange the whole in such a manner, that the correspondence between the different groups, as well as between the different parts of each of them, might be sufficiently obvious. It is upon the same principle that we endeavour, as far as circumstances will permit, to arrange the pieces in every collection whatever; as the plate and glasses on a sideboard, the china in a cupboard, the ornaments on a chimneypiece, and the articles in the drawers and shelves of a museum. And where an elegant arrangement is evidently attainable, the beauty of the different pieces considered sepa-

rately will not atone for the ugliness of confusion.

The productions of nature, as they strike the eye, exhibit chiefly that species of beauty which was first considered. Yet in almost all the animal, and in a great proportion of the vegetable forms, we are sensible of the beauty which results from the disposition of the parts, and this sometimes even in cases where we find no other beauty, in the more appropriate meaning of the word.

Thus a tree in winter, though it is deprived of its foliage, and though it has neither a fine colour, nor a smooth bark, nor a gently waving form, may still be beautiful. This, however, will depend upon circumstances. For on the one hand, we find no such pretensions in a thorn hedge stripped of its leaves, where the branches are so closely huddled up, as to have only the appearance of unconnected sticks. Nor, on the other hand, do we find any charms in a bare tree, when the branches from the stem are very inconsiderable both in number and size, with little resemblance to each other, irregularly placed, most of them perhaps

upon one side of the stem, inclined to it in very different, perhaps opposite angles, and sending out only a few puny twigs, irregularly scattered. But a very different effect is produced, when the expansion and general figure of the tree give us the idea of being able to trace with ease a long progress of ramification, at once diversified, regular, and gradual; diversified copiously by the number, and various sizes and various dispositions of the branches; regular, in the general similarity of those which are similarly situated; while the branches gradually diminish in size according to their more elevated situation, or according to their more remote connexion with the parent stem.

But if, even in the most superficial and cursory survey of external nature, we meet with various examples of the beauty of order, these examples multiply and increase in importance when the view is enlarged, and nature more accurately and skilfully examined. And the same principles, which prompt and direct us in arranging the most trifling ornaments, have also excited men of science, with infinite labour and

ingenuity, and with the happiest effects both for the communication and the application of knowledge, to detect, and bring to light, and reduce to the elegance of system, the various resemblances and correspondences, which both in the natural and moral world conceal themselves from the curiosity of common inquirers. This subject merits a particular illustration.

The earliest observers were led by the more obvious resemblances among the productions of the earth to the primary classifications of natural history. But the more extensive information, and minuter attention of their successors, have produced that arrangement of divisions and subdivisions, where (amidst the great diversity of species, and the infinite variety of individual objects) the regular distribution and gradual arrangement of the classes give a peculiar charm to this popular study.

Again; it is the great business of philosophy to investigate the laws of nature; and these laws consist in the correspondences which take place, either between different parts of the same operation of nature, or between different operations

compared with each other. Now although the discovery of these laws may in many cases require the utmost efforts of human genius, and though it may even be difficult to understand the evidence on which they are established, yet the correspondences which they exhibit are often simple enough to be apprehended with facility by ordinary capacities, and to afford striking examples of the beauty of order.

Thus in the state of science when Galileo lived, it required the extraordinary abilities of that great man to discover the law, which regulates the descent of falling bodies. Yet the law itself may be distinctly apprehended by any person who knows what is meant by the series of odd numbers, 1, 3, 5, 7, &c.; for it is simply what follows. Let a body be dropped from a height, and suppose it to be so heavy, that the resistance of the air will produce no sensible retardation. Divide the whole time of its descent into any number of equal portions, which we shall call moments; and let the body fall from rest through one inch (or whatever the space may be) during the first moment. Then

it will fall through three inches during the second moment, through five inches during the third, through seven during the fourth, and so on; the number of inches described during the first, second, third, and fourth moments, being respectively equal to the first, second, third, and fourth odd numbers; and in general the number of inches described during each successive moment being equal to the odd number which corresponds to it in order. Now this law may be distinctly apprehended by any person, who chooses to attend to it; and any person who apprehends it, will be sensibly soothed in contemplating the relation between the spaces described during the successive moments, a relation abundantly striking and continually varying; but varying without perplexity, and by gradual transitions.

We have more brilliant examples in Kepler's celebrated laws of the planetary motions. The Greek astronomers had supposed, that all the motions in the heavens were uniform and circular; but Kepler perceived, that in the case of the planets, neither of these suppositions was

consistent with the appearances, when accurately observed. The orbit, in which a planet revolves round the sun, is not a circle, but an oval of that kind, which mathematicians have called the ellipse, having the sun not in its centre, but in one of the two points called the foci. Moreover, the velocity of the planet is continually varying, yet by no means in the same proportion as its distance from the sun; and it was not easy to discover any general relation between the spaces through which it moves in equal times. Kepler, however, with admirable sagacity, considering the subject from another point of view, perceived amidst the apparent confusion a very remarkable and unexpected regularity. Let us conceive the planet to be pierced through its centre by a wire of indefinite length, along which it can move freely like a bead; and that one end of the wire is placed in the centre of the sun. As the planet revolves, the wire will be carried round with it, so that in the course of a revolution that part of the wire which is terminated by the centres of the sun and planet will sweep over the whole

area of the elliptical orbit. And Kepler's discovery was this; that those portions of the area are equal to each other, over which the wire sweeps in equal times.

In this case, as also in Galileo's law of falling bodies, we have an example of the different parts of the same operation so exhibited and arranged, as to render their connexion distinct and conspicuous. Connexions not less curious and unexpected have been discovered, when different operations were compared with each other. It was well known, for instance, that the periodic times of the different planets, or the times, which they severally employ in one complete revolution round the sun, are shorter in the planets which are nearer the sun, than in those which are more remote. But it was obvious to every person, who knew the rule of three, that the periodic times of no two planets were in the same proportion as either their longest, or shortest, or medium distances from the sun. Yet as that great luminary appeared to be the common regulator of their movements, or as at least he had a similar position in all

their orbits, it was natural to suppose, that the times were in some way or other connected with the distances. In fact, there is a very intimate and even striking connexion between them, although its discovery required the indefatigable industry of Kepler. The connexion is well known to be this; that the squares of the numbers expressing the periodic times, are in the same proportion as the cubes of the numbers expressing the medium distances. Now whatever labour the discovery may have cost, yet it may readily be understood by any one, who knows only what is meant by proportion in the rule of three, and by the squares and cubes of numbers. And combining this law with that which has just been mentioned, of the equality of the areas described in equal times, we rest with delight in this exhibition, which, instead of the disorder that seems at first sight to prevail in the planetary system, displays so regular an arrangement, amidst all the variety in the position and movement of its parts.

The principles of beauty will be still farther illustrated, if we attend to the difference between

Kepler's and Newton's discoveries. Kepler confined his attention to the higher regions; but Newton's bolder eye "glanced from "Heaven to Earth, from Earth to Hea-"ven,"* and with a wonderful combination of patience, skill, and genius, this great philosopher discovered at last, that the motions of the moon, of the planets, and of the heavy bodies around us, are all regulated by the same laws; that if human power or art could throw forward a cannon-ball with a certain velocity, and if the resistance of the air were destroyed, the ball, while it tended downward by its weight, would still be kept aloof by its projectile velocity, and continue, as an humbler satellite, to revolve round the Earth; that if stones were substituted for the bodies of the planetary system, that is to say, if these bodies were annihilated, and if stones were once for all thrown forward in their places, in their directions, and with their velocities, the stones would continue to revolve with the same regularity.

How shall we characterize this view of the universe? It is unexpected; it is astonishing;

* Shakspeare.

and whether we consider the genius of Newton, or the power displayed in originating and regulating the rapid motions of those stupendous bodies, it is singularly sublime. But the abrupt transition from the stones of the ground to the stars of Heaven, produces a state of mind very different from the soothing tranquillity which is essential to beauty.

On the other hand, in Kepler's exhibition of the planetary movements, all is not only regular but homogeneous; and while we are relieved by variety, we are not agitated by any violent disproportion either in the nature or the grandeur of the objects. And accordingly, it is only when he confines his attention to the great bodies of the universe, that Newton ascribes beauty to the system, and such a beauty as he justly considers to be a mark of its divine original. In his own impressive words; "*Elegantissima* hæcce solis, planeta-"rum, et cometarum compages, non nisi con-"silio et dominio entis intelligentis et potentis "oriri potuit."*

* Newtoni Principia, Lib. 3. Scholium generale.

In general, it is the business of philosophy to arrange the objects both of the natural and moral world, and also the ideas of the human mind, according to their more important relations.—Hence we are soothed with the elegance of order, instead of the irregular, bewildering medley, in which those objects and ideas are actually exhibited by nature, or in which they appear to us from our imperfect comprehension. And the only things which can efface the beauty of these arrangements, are too great intricacy, and too great abruptness of transition.

At the same time, it is not to be understood, that intricacy and abrupt transition may not to a certain degree be introduced with propriety, even in those cases where the exhibition of beauty is the principal design. On the contrary, beauty cloys by itself, and we are glad when it is qualified by somewhat of a less regular or more complicated character. This rouses and stimulates, and thereby counteracts the cloying effect, and renders us more sensible to the delight of soothing impressions.

Many persons will recollect how much they have been charmed with the first representation which is usually given of the planetary system: the sun immovable in the centre; the planets revolving uniformly round him in circles, at different distances, in different times, and with different velocities, but the velocities so proportioned, that the periodic times have all the same connexion, and a very remarkable one, with the respective distances of the planets from the sun.

Here certainly is a beautiful picture; but it is greatly enlivened, without losing its beauty, by the transitions, the complications, and even the seeming irregularities, which discover themselves on a nearer inspection, or which must result from the tendencies of the heavenly bodies to each other. The sun, in consequence of his tendency to each of the planets, is in a constant but gentle agitation; the planets revolve in ellipses, with velocities continually varying, but the velocity of every planet varying in such a manner as to produce an equable description of the area of its orbit; the planets

all move in different planes, and cross the plane of the Earth's orbit in different quarters of the Heavens; nor do they follow the precise path to which the sun would confine them, but show their respect for each other by a mutual approach as they pass. But while we are engaged with the heavenly bodies, which move in orbits not differing greatly from circles, and in planes not diverging beyond the limits of the zodiac, our contemplation is interrupted and varied by the arrival of those unexpected visitants, the comets; which revolve indeed by the same general laws, but which move in planes diverging to all the quarters of the heavens, and which are drawn to the neighbourhood of the sun from regions far beyond the sphere of the Georgium Sidus itself, and return through their long and narrow orbits to those deep recesses of the void, where they linger for years and even for ages, still influenced, but scarcely influenced, by the almost extinguished powers of the solar attraction.

Now however difficult or impossible it may

be to calculate minutely all the particulars of the system, yet it is not so difficult to form a general idea of its principal movements. And when once we are able, without a painful exertion, to trace in some measure the regularity which prevails in its intricacies, the resemblances which harmonize its diversities, and the connexion of such various effects with one single cause, we feel how much superior to what the orrery represents or suggests is the exhibition, which now rises in the imagination, and with how great propriety Sir Isaac Newton has described it, as elegant in the highest degree.

In general, the beauty of order is improved and rendered more engaging by intricacy and by abrupt transitions, when the intricacy is not so great as to require a painful exertion in tracing the relations of the parts, nor the transitions so violent as to shock us with discordant feelings. And in like manner every kind of beauty becomes more alluring by intermixing qualities of an animating and even of an irritating nature, not so as to destroy the

pleasing serenity and languor which are the characteristical effects, but only to prevent them from degenerating into satiety or weariness, and also, by rousing the attention, to render us more susceptible of their delights.

A smooth-flowing stream, for example, when other circumstances are the same, is certainly more beautiful than one whose course is checked and disturbed, and its waters dashed and fretted among stones and rocks. Yet a stream of this latter kind, even when it is far from aspiring to sublimity, may add a wonderful charm to a beautiful landscape. And it is evident, that as we are soothed and lulled by smoothness, gentle variation, and regularity, so we are roused and even irritated by roughness, abruptness, and intricacy. So likewise, although there is no expression of countenance so beautiful in itself as that of serenity and tenderness; yet it is not half so engaging in its simple state, as when it is lighted up with vivacity, or ennobled by dignity, or even as when we perceive through all the predominant mildness, that the temper is irritable to a

certain degree. Nature in her loveliest productions has not omitted those ornaments, which are required as the seasoners of beauty. We see it obviously in trees, and in all the most elegant vegetables. It is extremely remarkable in the tufts, the crests, and the ruffs which diversify the smooth plumage of the finest birds. And every one must have felt how much the allurements of female beauty are increased by the eyelashes, and eyebrows, and irregular ringlets.

If it be thought singular, that the charms of beauty should be increased by circumstances which are the reverse of beautiful, we may refer to a case which is analogous in the sense of taste. A sweet or luscious taste quickly satiates and cloys of itself, but is rendered agreeably delicious when tempered by pungency, acidity, or bitterness. In like manner, beauty becomes far more engaging by a certain intermixture of the irritating qualities, as roughness, abrupt variation, intricacy, and disorder. To these qualities Mr. Uvedale Price has appropriated the name of picturesque.* Whether the picturesque in

* Essay on the Picturesque and Beautiful.

this sense of the word deserve to be cultivated or introduced on its own account into any of the fine arts, it is not our present business to consider. But it is well known (as we have already seen in a former essay), that these qualities are highly congenial to the sublime. And Mr. Price in his ingenious treatise has shown, by various examples, how much a certain degree of them contributes to the improvement of beauty.

It is obvious that beauty, in one form or other, is frequently the source of great delight in literary compositions, as well as in all the fine arts. It is, indeed, only certain compositions which admit the description of beautiful objects. But however destitute of charms the subject may be in itself, even though it should be the author's design to instruct us in the dry and stern sciences of law, metaphysics, or mathematics, he should never forget to adorn his work with elegance of method. And according to the principles already stated, this consists in such a representation and arrangement of the subject, as may serve to render the important relations be-

tween the different parts sufficiently conspicuous; and, while as great a variety is introduced as may be consistent with the purpose of the work, to prevent both perplexity and too abrupt transitions. Now the less entertaining or the more difficult the subject is in itself, it is the more proper to relieve the reader by every contrivance which does not obstruct the main design. And it has already been observed, that the beauty of order is not only highly agreeable, but also contributes greatly to produce a distinct apprehension, and a lively and ready recollection of the work in all its different parts, an object which ought certainly to be studied by every author, and more particularly when the design is instruction.

But when the subject is difficult in itself, it would be absurd to introduce artificial intricacy, or to puzzle without necessity by abrupt transitions. On the contrary, such an arrangement ought, as far as possible, to be studied, that each division of the work may naturally introduce what follows it, and that the connexion between all the different divisions as we go along may be

kept distinctly and steadily in view. The case is different where the subject is easy, and more especially where amusement is intended. Thus, in that part of fictitious histories or dramatic representations which unravels the plot, and where we gradually discover how the several characters and incidents contribute to the final result, our gratification is much enlivened by the previous uncertainty and confusion. The confusion, indeed, may easily be carried too far, as in some of the older romances. But it is managed by Fielding with the hand of a master, in the beautiful mechanism of the fable and arrangement of the incidents, which delight us so much in the history of a Foundling.

With regard to the representation of beautiful objects, it is much to be regretted, that it has so often been employed, and even by the most eminent authors, to inflame desires, which, without the aid of artificial incentives, are abundantly ardent and importunate of themselves. This, indeed, is only what might be expected from writers of profligate characters, or in grosser times. But we are surprised at the frequent and

laboured indelicacies of Fielding; and we are still more mortified, when men of such piety as Tasso and Milton, and even in books professedly religious, exert the highest powers of composition for a purpose so ignoble and superfluous. Yet these very authors have shown in other passages how much they could delight us by the description both of personal beauty and of the tenderest love, without forcing on our attention what any man would be chastised for introducing into general conversation, and what cannot be less improper in books designed for general entertainment.

Indeed it is obvious, that the beautiful may be introduced into composition with the happiest effect, and yet without the smallest violation of good manners. We have seen in the foregoing essays how well it may be employed to soften the painful emotions, and also to heighten the pathetic and the tender. It may also become itself the principal object in certain compositions. The more soothing charms of nature, the more soothing views of life, are the great sources of our pleasure in many descriptive and

pastoral poems. And such compositions are capable of no small variety. Both in the natural and moral world, beauty is exhibited in a great diversity of forms, and imagination can enlarge and improve the sphere of observation. Besides, the beautiful admits, in many different ways, of being rendered interesting by combinations of terror and sorrow; or of being enlivened by its natural association with the gay and joyful, or of being ennobled by its union with the virtuous or the sublime.

Nor ought those compositions in which the beautiful predominates, to be regarded as of little importance. They afford a sweet relaxation from our cares and fatigues, when we are too much worn out to endure the more violent emotions. They insensibly calm the "perturbed "spirit;" or, in the language of Thomson,

> "Sooth every gust of passion into peace,
> "All but the swellings of the soften'd heart,
> "That waken, not disturb, the tranquil mind."*

They bring before us this remarkable and affecting indication of the divine goodness, that

* Thomson's Spring.

even amidst the wreck of creation, and the trials of a probationary state, unspeakable care is displayed, not only in providing for our wants, but likewise in adorning all nature for our delight. And they will afford us the highest consolation, as well as contribute to the advancement of our best concerns, if, amidst the confusion and deformities, the vices and distresses, which so often disfigure the present scene, they carry forward our view to that period, when the works of God shall be restored to their primeval beauty, and the reign of order and felicity return.

ESSAY IX.

ON THE LUDICROUS.

VARIOUS theories of the ludicrous or laughable have been proposed by Aristotle and succeeding philosophers; but I know of none which appears to be so well founded as Dr. Hutcheson's, who maintains, in his *Reflections on Laughter*, that the ludicrous consists in the contrast of dignity and meanness, whether the dignity and meanness reside both in the same object, or in different objects which are nearly related to each other. It will be understood, however, that we are not always sensible of the ludicrous in these cases, unless there be somewhat unusual and striking in the contrast, while at the same time we are disengaged to a certain degree from any serious emotion.

It is proper also to remark, that the bodily movement, to which according to its degree we give the name of smiling or laughter, is a very equivocal sign of our perception of the ludicrous. For, in the first place, this perception is not always, though it is no doubt frequently, accompanied by the bodily movement. Some persons, who seldom or never laugh, are abundantly sensible of drollery: And, in the second place, the bodily movement is excited in some cases of a very different kind. There is a smile of surprise and of admiration; a smile of affection; a smile and even a laugh of joy; there is even a smile of contempt, of envy, and of malice; and laughter may be excited in the most violent degree by tickling and by hysterics.

In these cases it will not be said, that the bodily movement is produced by any thing which we call ludicrous, or even laughable. It may be observed, however, that our feelings in some of these cases are frequently mingled with those which arise from the ludicrous. Thus we may despise the person whom we laugh at as ludicrous, and to such an object the epithet of *ridi-*

culous is appropriated. And if our contempt rise to a remarkable height, more especially if it be tinged with indignation, the emotion is more particularly called derision; and they who give full vent to their derision, are, with great propriety and force of expression, said to laugh the object of it to scorn. Again, our laughter at the ludicrous may be combined both with surprise and admiration; as when we are entertained with those *unexpected* and *ingenious* sallies of drollery, to which we give the name of wit. Still, however, the state of mind produced by the ludicrous we feel plainly distinguishable from our other emotions.

But it has not been found easy to determine precisely the nature of the cases, to which the name of ludicrous is applied. For, beside the different accounts which were given by former philosophers, some later writers have considered Dr. Hutcheson's theory as not sufficiently comprehensive, and have accordingly stated as a juster description, that the ludicrous results from incongruity in general, or from some unsuitableness, or want of relation in certain re-

spects, among objects which are related in other respects. This is Dr. Gerard's account in his Essay on Taste, and has been adopted by Dr. Campbell in his Philosophy of Rhetoric, and by Dr. Beattie in his Essay on Laughter and Ludicrous Composition.

It may be doubted, however, whether this alteration of Dr. Hutcheson's theory be any real improvement, either in the science of criticism or of the human mind. It is acknowledged by the very writers who propose the alteration, that the contrast between dignity and meanness constitutes the principal class of laughable objects. And in the examples which have been hitherto produced as belonging to a different class, it may not, perhaps, be difficult to show, that the effect depends on somewhat that is mean or trifling, connected with somewhat that is great, important, or serious. Dr. Beattie has favoured the public not only with several excellent observations on the subject, but also with the most copious collection of examples to support the theory, that incongruity in general is the source of the ludicrous; and of these

we shall consider such as the learned author conceives to exhibit no contrast of dignity and meanness.

But before we proceed, it is proper to observe, that several incongruities, which Dr. Hutcheson would no doubt have regarded as illustrations of his theory, are stated by Dr. Beattie as of a different kind. Thus he conceives that the absurd epitaphs, or love-letters, written by illiterate persons, may exhibit no apparent contrast of dignity and meanness, even when there is "a vast disproportion "between the *seriousness* of the author and the "*insignificance* of his work, beside many odd "contrasts in the work itself, of *mean* phrases "and sentiments aspiring to *importance*, of "*sounding words* with *little signification*, of sen-"tences that seem to *promise much* but end "in *nothing*."* Examples of this sort ought surely to be considered as very favourable illustrations of Dr. Hutcheson's doctrine. And his theory ought in all fairness to be understood as comprised in the following proposition;

* Beattie's Essays, 4to. p. 642.

namely, that the ludicrous consists in the contrast of somewhat that is great, important, or serious, connected with somewhat that is mean or trifling.

We now proceed to consider the cases which Dr. Beattie has stated in opposition to Dr. Hutcheson.

A little reflection may satisfy us, that deformity ought not to have been produced as an example of this kind; and probably it would not, if it had been attended to, that our emotions are frequently raised, not merely by the objects actually exhibited or expressed, but also by the ideas which these objects suggest. Now deformity is a remarkable deviation from the natural appearance of the human body; the perception of deviation implies, of necessity, a comparison with the standard from which the deviation is made; and no one will dispute the elegance and dignity of the human form in its more perfect state.

Accordingly, we are not disposed to laugh when we see a *man*, who looks well in other respects, considerably larger than what we

regard as the proper standard, unless there be also a clumsiness or awkwardness incompatible with the dignity which we expect in so great a personage. But a *woman* six feet high, and indeed any woman of a masculine appearance, is always somewhat ludicrous; for here, as the word *virago* sufficiently indicates, we are amused by the fancy, that a person with a figure or character so manly should submit to the apparel and occupations of the weaker and more dependent sex; or that a person who assumes the dress of that part of our species from whom we expect a modest dignity and elegance, should exhibit that coarseness and arrogance, into which the manners of our sex are so apt to degenerate. On the other hand, when any one dwindles considerably below the standard, even the most beautiful face, and a form the most unexceptionable in every other respect, will not entirely remove the ludicrous appearance.

In those cases to which the name of deformity is commonly applied, the contrast between the noble and the mean is but too striking.

The crooked or distorted body or limbs make but a poor appearance, when compared with the graceful figures, of which they assume the name, and stand as the representatives. The features, which, in their natural arrangement, form, and proportion, are susceptible not only of so engaging, but of so dignified an expression, lose their character when they are turned awry, or diminished, or enlarged, beyond a certain degree, and become only unmeaning and awkward implements, stuck up in the places of objects which we admire. Do you call that a nose? do you call that a leg? are the questions which instantly occur even to children, when they divert themselves with a person who is ugly or deformed.

We can see too how it happens, that when the deformity is equal, the features which are enlarged appear more ludicrous than those which are diminished. That eminence of cheek-bone, that extent of chin, that prominence of nose, adorned, perhaps, with carbuncles, that protuberance of goggling eyes, exhibit a costly apparatus, a more than ordinary pre-

paration for the purposes of human physiognomy, but fall wonderfully short of their high pretensions.

Deformity, too, is not only ludicrous in itself, but is frequently rendered greatly more so, by means of some foolish expression which it may occasion in the face or figure, as of stupidity, or affectation, or pertness, or self-conceit, things which belong to a more important department of the ludicrous. Bodily deformity in itself, indeed, is seldom a fair subject of laughter in real life. It is a serious misfortune, which may fall to the lot of the worthiest, and which ridicule may embitter, but cannot remove; and we soon lose the perception of it in those with whom we live, at least if we esteem them. In real life it is unpardonable brutality to deride any one for such a cause, unless when he is vain of his personal charms, or when his whimsical appearance results from bad habits in the looks or gestures, produced by negligence or affectation.

The case is different in painting and in composition. The strange figures represented by

Hogarth, Bunbury, and other characteristical painters, afford a lively amusement, which does harm to nobody; and gratitude is due to every man of genius, who takes the trouble to furnish us with a harmless amusement. But it deserves to be remarked, that these representations of bodily deformity are chiefly valuable, when they render more prominent the oddities of character, and thus awaken more strongly our sense of the ludicrous in those follies which are the fair objects of ridicule, and for which ridicule is the proper correction. Thus in Hogarth's *Country Dance*, which that great master has sketched as an illustration of his principles in the *Analysis of Beauty*, as also in Bunbury's humorous drawing of the *Bath Minuet*, most of the figures are extremely laughable, not merely from the outward deformity which they have either received from nature, or into which they are pleased to throw themselves, but also from the affectation and self-conceit, of which these outward deformities, if they are not the actual effect, yet heighten the expression, or at least render it

more remarkable. So likewise in dramatic representations, and in fictitious history, something whimsical in the countenance, shape, or attitudes, is frequently introduced to throw a higher glare of ridicule on mental absurdity.

But mental absurdity itself, though not always so obvious to a common observer, forms a more amusing, as well as more important and comprehensive department of the ludicrous. It will not be difficult to show, that it exhibits a very striking contrast of dignity and meanness. And it will be proper to pay attention to this part of the subject, not only because it serves to explain in an easy and satisfactory manner several cases, which might otherwise appear inconsistent with Dr. Hutcheson's theory, but also because it supplies the materials of the only species of ludicrous composition, which deserves to be cultivated.

As deformity is a remarkable deviation from the appearance of the human body in its more perfect state, so absurdity is a remarkable deviation from that more perfect and accomplished state either of the moral or intellectual

character, in which the dignity of human nature principally consists; and it is needless to repeat, that the perception of deviation implies of necessity a comparison with the standard, from which the deviation is made. When a creature, claiming the name of rational, allows itself to be wrought into a ferment by the most frivolous causes, or defeats its own purposes by its own deliberations, we cannot but feel towards so nonsensical a personage somewhat of the same sentiments, which a humorous gentleman expressed of himself, who, when he played a bad stroke at cards, used to apostrophize his head, telling it in the plainest and shortest terms, that, whatever it might call itself, it was not fit to occupy a certain very ignoble department in the animal economy.

The absurdity that displays itself in the emotions or sentiments comprehends a variety of cases, which are every day exemplified in common life, and which are admirably adapted to the satirist and comic writer. Such, for instance, is the choleric man, who rages at every trifling inconvenience or disappointment;

the fine lady, who is thrown into hysterics by the fall of a china basin; the love-sick swain, who languishes for a silly girl that laughs at him; the coxcomb, who displays for his own person and accomplishments an admiration, which nobody else can entertain; the miser, who starves himself that he may gather a heap of what he never means to use, and is to leave to those whom he neither loves nor values.

In these instances the absurdity consists in the height to which the emotion is raised beyond what we should expect in a rational mind. But there are also ludicrous cases of the opposite kind, in which we are diverted with the slight impression which is made on the stupid or untaught, by objects that have a powerful effect on the feeling heart and cultivated understanding. Thus Garrick's theatrical powers, which rendered him the admiration of his country, were but poorly esteemed by Partridge; and thus the beauty and grandeur of nature are surveyed with indifference or contempt by many a London citizen and town-bred lady. And the jewish proverb, not to

throw pearls before swine, expresses strongly, and is currently employed to express, both our derision in those cases where moral depravity renders men insensible of high considerations, and also our ridicule in cases of smaller moment, as where the absurdity proceeds from want of sensibility or discernment in matters of taste.

But our emotions or sentiments may be ludicrous not only from their degree, but also from their inconsistency with each other. And the contrast of dignity and meanness appears but too conspicuous, when instead of the serenity that reigns in the mind whose affections and desires are regulated by reason, we observe the regrets and perplexities arising from the struggle of incompatible principles, as of avarice and vanity, or of indolence and ambition. Such cases, indeed, are frequently so important or interesting, that our laughter may be restrained by serious emotions, but otherwise they are extremely diverting: as when Harpagon, in Moliere's *Avare,* tortures his

brain to make a great show at a small expense; or when Sganarelle, in his *Mariage forcé,* is distracted, first between his fancy for a young gay wife, and his doubts of her fidelity; and afterward, between his terror for the marriage and his terror for the duel.

Even where there is no direct or evident inconsistency, yet a great inconstancy of sentiments forms a ludicrous character. Our amusement here may be increased by the contrast of dignity and meanness, which will frequently be exhibited in the various objects of such a person's affections or pursuits; as in the case of him, whom Dryden has described in so lively a manner,

> " Who in the course of one revolving moon
> " Was chemist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon."

But even although the objects of his fluctuating attachment should be all of uniform worth and importance, we cannot but laugh at the man, who devotes himself to every new object that

strikes his fancy, who, to use the words of Dryden,

> "Is every thing by fits, and nothing long."

Steadiness both of attachment and pursuit is an essential constituent of a respectable character; and we cannot but be struck with the contrast, when we observe a man veering about with every transient inclination; just as we could not but be struck with the want of that regularity which is requisite for a good time-piece, if a clock had its dial-plate connected with a weather-cock, so as to turn backwards or forwards with every breeze, and thus render it impossible to conjecture at what hour the hand would be pointing at any particular time of the day. Any one who has read Destouche's entertaining comedy entitled *l'Irrésolu,* will be more sensible of the justness of these observations.

The absurdities of the understanding also are well known to be ludicrous, and we cannot be at a loss for a similar explanation. When

a man blunders in his judgments or opinions, whether it proceeds from want of knowledge, or of recollection, from want of capacity, or of attention, it is still a person who makes a fool of himself, at the very time and in the very act of aspiring to the deliberative, that is to say, to the characteristical functions of an intelligent being.

Such blunders are often abundantly laughable even in speculative opinions, as might be illustrated by various examples from the learned and metaphysical discussions of Hudibras and his Squire, several of which are pointed out by Dr. Beattie. These examples are so extravagant, that we regard them as caricatures; and yet even in real life we sometimes meet with instances little inferior in absurdity, and that too in persons who are far from being fools, but who venture to discourse on subjects which they do not understand, or before they have taken the trouble to think of what they should say.

But our absurdities become more glaring when they display themselves in the conduct:

and as it is the exclusive property of the understanding to discover the fittest means for accomplishing our purposes; hence, when we observe a man employing means that are inadequate, or, still more absurdly, that counteract his purpose, we cannot but be struck with the contrast between his folly, and the dignity which he assumes of an intelligent being. We have a good example in the story of the gentleman, who after having been frequently distressed for want of a sixpence to open his snuff-box, which could not be opened easily without something of this kind, discovered at last, that the surest way of having a sixpence always ready for the purpose, was to keep it in the box itself.

If any thing farther be necessary to show, that our laughter at absurdity arises from our contrasting the folly of the absurd person with what we conceive to approach more nearly to the perfection of the human character, it will be remembered, that they who do not perceive the deviation from propriety, are also insensible of the joke. The coxcomb, who sees nothing

unsuitable to the highest dignity in his ostentatious display of himself, is astonished to be received with a titter, instead of the admiration to which he thinks himself entitled. A fine lady is provoked by the brutality of those, who smile at the distress into which her friend is thrown by the fall of a china basin; at least this will be the case, if she entertains no malice against her friend, if she has the same delicacy of nerves, or decorum of feeling, and the same just estimation of true Pekin. In the desperate case of the snuff-box, a person, who like the owner lost sight of one small circumstance (and it is wonderful how the most obvious things will sometimes escape the attention for a moment), that the sixpence when enclosed in the box could not be applied to the purpose wanted, so readily as the gentleman seems to have conceived in his first hasty view of the matter, would approve the sagacious contrivance, by which the poor man thought he had at last secured himself from much vexation during the rest of his life.

But enough has been said to illustrate the

general principle, that absurdity being nothing else than a deviation from that more perfect state of the moral or intellectual character, in which the dignity of human nature chiefly consists, hence whatever is perceived as an absurdity must of necessity present a contrast of dignity and meanness: and it will not be disputed, that what we perceive to be absurd, we feel of course to be ludicrous, unless when we are controlled by serious emotions.

Now several instances of the ludicrous mentioned by Dr. Beattie are acknowledged absurdities, though he accounts for their effect in a different manner.

Thus he remarks, that "Sancho's proverbs "often provoke a smile; not because some "are low, and others elevated, but because, "though unconnected with the subject and "with one another, they happen to be spoken "at the same time, and absurdly applied "to the same purpose."* And this is one of the examples which he produces to show,

* Beattie's Essays, 4to. p. 611.

that a group of objects, which are otherwise unconnected, may become in some degree laughable by juxtaposition. Yet surely no person laughs at such a collection of proverbs or unconnected sentences as we find in several grammars, for exemplifying the idioms of a foreign language. He may be amused, indeed, with those which are ludicrous in themselves; or with the contiguity of an elevated and a low one, or of a serious and a trivial one, as if we should suppose the proverb, Evil communications corrupt good manners, to be followed by, Money makes the mare to go; or he may be amused if they should be arranged in such a manner as to have the appearance of raving. But it is not easy to conceive, that their mere juxtaposition should "provoke a smile" from a person of the lightest mind. And what is diverting in Sancho Panca's proverbs is plainly (a circumstance which is hinted at by Dr. Beattie himself) the *absurdity* of their application, and also the absurdity of his pretensions to wisdom, which are founded on the facility with which

he repeats a chime of old sayings, sagacious in themselves, but extremely little to the purpose.

Dr. Beattie has also observed, that "the "mind naturally considers as part of the same "assemblage and joins together in one view "those objects, that appear in the relation "of cause and effect. Hence," he says, "when things in other respects unrelated or "incongruous are found or supposed to be "thus related, they sometimes provoke laugh-"ter."* And on this principle he accounts for our laughter at conclusions founded upon inadequate premises, at the employment of means which are disproportioned to the purpose intended, and at emotions which are either too violent or too languid for the occasion. Now all these cases are plainly instances of absurdity, and indeed have been already illustrated by examples. And it appears, that even when there is no contrast of dignity and meanness between the conclusion

* Beattie's Essays, 4to. p. 612.

and the premises, or between the emotions and their cause, yet a very remarkable contrast of this kind is forced upon our attention by the absurdity which is displayed.

We must take notice also of another kind of absurdity, as Dr. Beattie has produced some examples of it by way of a direct contradiction to Dr. Hutcheson's theory. It is that talkativeness or itch of speaking, which, without regard to time or place, gives utterance to every silly or impertinent thought that is passing through the mind. Here is certainly a very striking deviation from that use of speech which is dictated by common sense, and by a decent respect for the feelings of others; and nobody, who is not as foolish, or as thoughtless and indelicate as the talker himself, will be blind to the contrast of propriety and folly: more especially as the proper use of speech is the faculty by which we are most obviously distinguished as rational creatures.

In real life, indeed, this absurdity, which we meet with but too frequently, is often so insipid and spun out to so great a length, or

so offensive, that our laughter is extinguished by weariness or anger. But we find it always amusing in compositions, where it cannot hurt our feelings, where we may take as much or as little of it as we please, and at the time when we are most disposed for it, and especially when it is conducted by authors like Cervantes, or Shakspeare, or Fielding, who know how to enliven it by novelty.

Upon the whole then we cannot admit, that the nonsensical and ill-timed loquacity or other follies of Sancho Panca, of Hostess Quickly, or of the nurse in Romeo and Juliet, or in general any laughable absurdities of character whatever, are at all inconsistent with the theory, that the ludicrous consists in the contrast of dignity and meanness.*

After what has been said it will readily occur, that the general principle, which has been applied to absurdity and to bodily deformity, is applicable also to other cases. If objects of whatever kind possess in their more

* See Dr. Beattie's Essays, 4to. p. 599 and 611.

perfect state any magnificence or beauty, any utility or convenience at all, we cannot fail to be struck with the contrast of meanness and comparative dignity or importance, when some disfigured, or maimed, or unmanageable individual of the species presents itself for our use or admiration.

Dr. Beattie has mentioned an example in Swift's inventory of his household stuff;

> " An oaken broken elbow-chair,
> " A caudle cup without an ear," &c.

He ascribes our laughter, however, to this circumstance, that " the *various* and *dissimilar* " articles specified in the inventory are *similar* " and *uniform* in this one respect, that they " are all worn out, imperfect, or useless; but " their meanness, he observes, is without any " mixture of dignity."* Now if this were a just account of the matter, we should also be disposed to laugh at reading an inventory, or viewing a collection of furniture, in which all

* Beattie's Essays, 4to. p. 610.

the articles were in the highest order, since the *various* and *dissimilar* articles would in this case also be *similar* and *uniform* in one respect, being all new, perfect, and convenient. On the other hand, although it may be true, that the meanness of Swift's household stuff is without any mixture of dignity, yet we cannot but be struck with the contrast between the meanness and inconvenience of so beggarly an equipage, and the elegance and comforts of a well furnished house. A very complete set of furniture truly! is the remark which naturally occurs on reading the Dean's inventory. And in general when we laugh at any thing which is imperfect or faulty in its kind, we are always ready to use some such expression of ironical praise; which shows that our laughter arises from comparing the object with the more respectable individuals of the species in which it claims to be ranked.

Dr. Beattie has also mentioned, in opposition to Dr. Hutcheson, the character of Sir Toby in the Twelfth Night, and of Autolycus in the

Winter's Tale.* Now with regard to the first of these, the principles already stated are applicable to the absurdities of his drunken ravings. But this facetious gentleman affords us also other sources of entertainment. Sir Toby is more rogue than fool; and we laugh chiefly at the drollery with which he plays on the timidity and vanity of Sir Andrew Aguecheek, and the readiness with which this simple youth swallows the nonsensical commendations, and trusts to the directions of a sot, who seeks only to gull him of his money and expose him to ridicule.

Here there is little difficulty in accounting for our laughter on Dr. Hutcheson's principles. The drollery in which Sir Toby excelled is well known under the cant name of *quizzing*; and consists in delivering nonsense or falsehood, so that it may pass for wisdom or truth. And in this case we are presented with more than one laughable contrast. There is the nonsense or falsehood, which we despise, assuming

* Beattie's Essays, 4to. p. 599.

the importance and seriousness of wisdom or truth; while the attention and submission due to the latter only are bestowed on the former, instead of the contempt which it deserves. In fact, it is well known, that the joke is in proportion not only to the magnitude of the nonsense or falsehood, but also to the gravity with which it is delivered, and the respect with which it is received. We are often amused with the high opinion which the dupe entertains of himself, compared with the silly figure which he is making in the eyes of every other person. And in the dupe's simplicity, and in the extravagance of his vanity, self-conceit, cowardice, or some other emotion, which is brought into play by the person who imposes on him, there is exhibited that contrast of dignity and meanness, which, as we have already observed, is implied in the very nature of absurdity. Besides, in the particular case which we are now considering, of Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek, the advantageous and happy situation, which the latter flattered himself with the prospect of obtaining, compared with the

contemptible one in which he actually appears, not only renders his folly more conspicuous, but is itself a striking contrast of the very same kind with that which the present theory supposes to constitute the ludicrous. For poor Sir Andrew, instead of establishing without any risk a reputation for courage, and marrying a lady of the first beauty and fortune, as his friend Sir Toby had led him to expect; gets his head broken disgracefully, is never looked at by the lady, and is cheated by his worthy adviser out of two thousand pounds.

It is perfectly consistent, therefore, with Dr. Hutcheson's theory, that an exhibition of *quizzing* should excite our laughter. And in this humour of *quizzing*, and in the absurdities of his drunken ravings, together with now and then a pun, or a repartee (which two species of the ludicrous we shall consider afterwards), consists all that is laughable in Sir Toby's character or conversation.

With regard to Autolycus, if we except that he does not appear to be a professional drunkard, he is a droll of the same kind with Sir

Toby; but he is in the lowest rank of life, and acts both the buffoon and the rogue without reserve, with little fear for his neck, and with none for his character.

It will be remarked, too, that in the representation both of Autolycus and Sir Toby, a considerable part of our laughter is to be ascribed to the buffoonery of the actor; by which I mean not only the grimaces of countenance, but likewise all the oddities of dress, attitudes, voice, appearance, and behaviour in general, which are ludicrous by their glaring deviation from propriety, and to which the observations already stated concerning deformity and absurdity are evidently applicable. And if our laughter at buffoonery is agreeable to Dr. Hutcheson's theory, no objection to that theory can be founded on the case mentioned by Dr. Beattie* of one buffoon mimicking another, where to our amusement from the buffoonery is superadded the pleasure which we receive from the imitation. The two persons

* Beattie's Essays, 4to. p. 598.

may, indeed, be perfectly on a level with each other; but this will not prevent us from feeling the contrast between the exhibition which they make of themselves, and the natural appearance and deportment of the more respectable and accomplished of our species.

But in another part of his Essay* it is suggested, that mimickry is ludicrous even in those cases in which it "displays no contrast of "dignity and meanness;" and our laughter is ascribed by Dr. Beattie to this circumstance, that as "we perceive the actions of one man "joined to the features and body of another," there is of course "a mixture of unsuitableness, "or want of relation, arising from the difference "of the persons, with congruity and similitude, "arising from the sameness of the actions." Dr. Beattie, however, has produced no example or illustration; and it is evident that Dr. Hutcheson's theory will not be affected by the observation, unless it can be shown that there may be cases which we shall feel to be ludi-

* Beattie's Essays, 4to. p. 603.

crous, although we are not struck with any contrast between what is dignified or serious, and what is mean or trifling.

In fact, specimens of mimickry may be conceived, which would not excite laughter. Garrick is said to have possessed uncommon talents as a mimick; and it may be presumed, that he could have affected his hearers with very serious emotions by delivering a speech in the character of Lord Mansfield.

Such specimens, however, are extremely rare. For the imitation must always be chiefly directed to the peculiarities of the original; and very few performers will be able to restrain themselves (and very few spectators would be gratified if they did) from exaggerating these peculiarities to some degree of caricature, that is to say, of deformity and absurdity. And even although there is no exaggeration, yet it will seldom be possible, by the most skilful management, to remove all appearance of caricature, where the peculiarities of one man are exhibited in the person of another.

Besides, the most serious specimens of mi-

mickry must have some tendency to suggest certain ludicrous ideas. What was originally grave and important is now converted into an amusement. The companion, who was conversing with liveliness and familiarity, has all at once put on the dignity of a judge, or risen to the vehemence of the most interesting emotions. There may also be a striking contrast between the character or the station of the performer, and that of the person whom he represents. Or if in these respects they are both on a level, and both of dignity, there will then be a contrast between the real dignity of the performer and the humble capacity of a mimick, in which he condescends to officiate for our entertainment. Although some of these contrasts are suggested by serious theatrical representations, yet they can scarcely have any sensible effect when these representations are tolerably conducted, on account of the powerful emotions by which we are subdued. But we can seldom meet with exhibitions of mimickry sufficiently impressive and pathetic.

Upon the whole, even the case of serious mimickry has nothing inconsistent with Dr. Hutcheson's theory.

Parody may be considered as a species of mimickry; it is one composition mimicking another. When the imitation, either from its subject or language, or any other circumstance, is much inferior in dignity to the original, our laughter is perfectly consistent with the theory. But Dr. Beattie says, that "Parodies may be "ludicrous from the opposition between *simi-* "*larity* of phrase and *diversity* of meaning, even "though both the original and the imitation be "serious."* The only thing, however, which he produces as an example of such a parody, is the following stanza from an imitation of Gray's celebrated Elegy:

> "Bread was his only food, his drink the brook,
> "So small a salary did his rector send:
> "He left his laundress all he had, a book:
> "He found in death, 'twas all he wish'd, a friend."

Now the second and third of these lines are

* Beattie's Essays. 4to. p. 637.

so mean, when compared with the dignity which we expect in serious poetry, and particularly with the admirable verses which correspond to them in the original, that they seem fitter to be quoted in illustration than in opposition to the theory. And Dr. Beattie's observation concerning the ludicrous nature of parodies in general, appears directly inconsistent with the following fact. We find in the Æneid a variety of passages, which are evidently imitations or parodies of certain passages in the Iliad and Odyssey. The subjects in both authors are of equal grandeur; many readers, although great admirers of Homer, are yet of opinion, that Virgil is not inferior in *dignity* to his master; and it will not be said, that such readers at least are tempted to laugh when they compare the Latin parodies with the Greek originals.

But Dr. Beattie has brought forward a very respectable champion of a different kind, in the character of the good Dr. Harrison in Fielding's Amelia. "Dr. Harrison," he observes, "is never mean, but always respect-

" able; yet there is a dash of humour in him, " which often betrays the reader into a smile.*" But the occasions, on which this excellent person tempts us to smile, are when he is hurried into a boyish impetuosity or levity of expression or behaviour, which, although it does not diminish our esteem, yet certainly lowers our veneration, and affords a striking enough contrast with his respectable qualities, as well as with the moderation and calmness which are essential constituents of dignity. This is the light in which we view the good Divine, when, after commending Booth's conduct with regard to Amelia, he declared, that if he knew half a dozen of such instances in the army, the painter should put red liveries on all the saints in his closet; or when the violence with which his indignation made him toss about the expensive toys which he found in Booth's lodgings, frightened the servant-girl into the belief that he was come to pillage the house; or, when he tells Colonel Bath, who had declared

* Beattie's Essays, 4to. p. 599.

that he would fight for the church of England to the last drop of his blood; that it was very generous in him to do so much for a religion by which he was to be damned.

In this last instance, indeed, there is another distinct source of laughter, which we shall just remark, as it explains how repartees excite our mirth, even although what is said may have nothing ludicrous in itself. The Doctor having insisted, that Colonel Bath's principles with regard to duelling were altogether incompatible with Christianity, the Colonel declared, that he was not only a Christian of the church of England, but was ready to shed his blood in her defence, an observation which produced the blunt reply that has been already mentioned. Now, upon this occasion, we laugh not only at the absurd impetuosity of the reverend pastor, but also at the Colonel's foolish appearance, compared with the self-importance assumed in the dignified remark, which produced the unexpected and confounding repartee.

This reply, however, is so presumptuous and

even brutal, that, although we are amused at the Colonel's confusion, we are at the same time ashamed for the hot-headed Doctor. But the finest repartees are those, which, although they *suggest* a proper censure to humble the antagonist, yet, in their direct meaning, are complimentary, or, at least, inoffensive. The antagonist is thus more completely confounded, and even appears to be deprived of all means of retaliation. A certain author, who has been accused of adopting unintelligible tenets, said to a person whose learning he respected, but of whose metaphysical acuteness he did not entertain so high an opinion, "I will send you my book, if you "will promise to read it;" "I shall certainly "read it," said the other, "if you will pro-"mise that I shall understand it." "Nay," replied the first, "I cannot answer for "that."

Beside the specimen which Fielding has exhibited in the character of Dr. Harrison, there are various other cases, in which we are diverted by the mixture and contrast of childish-

ness or levity with what is respectable or serious. Dr. Beattie has produced* a curious instance from the Beggar's Opera. "Really, "madam," says Filch to Mrs. Peachum, "I "fear I shall be cut off in the flower of my "youth; so that every now and then, since I "was pumped, I have thoughts of taking up, "and going to sea." Here we may perceive two distinct causes of laughter, both perfectly consistent with Dr. Hutcheson's theory. First, we have a sufficiently striking contrast of dignity and meanness, between the discipline of pumping to which Filch was subjected, and the good resolutions to which it had given rise in his mind. But, secondly, we are to take notice of another circumstance: the speaker appears at the beginning to be impressed with a most important consideration, and we are immediately surprised with a very singular contrast of levity, which discovers itself in his whimsical account of the first turn of his thoughts to reformation and a sea-faring life.

* Beattie's Essays, 4to. p. 612.

We have sometimes a contrast of the same kind in conversation, when a person, for his amusement, affects to understand what is said, in a sense different from that which is really intended. "In what light," cried one, "do "you consider the man, who is caught in "adultery?" "As a tardy fellow," replied another.* There is, indeed, in this example, a contrast of importance and meanness in the different views, which these two persons take of the adulterer; the one impressed with his guilt, the other attending only to his tardiness. But we laugh also at the contrast between the seriousness of the one and the playfulness of the other. And accordingly, even when there is no importance in the subject, or in any of the views which are taken of it, we are still diverted, when the one party trifles while the other is serious. As in the common story: "What wine do you like best?" "Port,"

* This is expressed much more neatly in Latin:

Qualem existimas qui in adulterio deprehenditur? Tardum.

Cicero de Oratore, l. 2.

says one; "Claret," says another; "the wine "of other people," says a third.

Punning is nothing else than using an expression in a meaning different from that in which it would be employed upon the occasion by a person speaking seriously. As in Martial's epigram:

> Esse nihil dicis quicquid petis, improbe Cinna:
> Si nil, Cinna, petis, *nil* tibi, Cinna, nego.

> 'Tis nothing now, you simpering say,
> The favour which you beg to-day:
> Why then, dear sir, you must allow,
> That I refuse you *nothing now.*

A similar contrast of seriousness and trifling appears in the Paronomasia, which consists in the antithesis of expressions similar in sound but different in meaning. "Some men's *Paradise*," said a preacher, "is a *pair of dice;* "*matrimony* is become a *matter of money;* and "*all houses* are turned into *ale-houses.* Were "there such doings in the days of *Noah?* "*Ah, no.*"

Dr. Beattie* agreeably to the theory which he has adopted, and in opposition to Dr. Hutcheson's, ascribes our laughter upon such occasions to the mixture of sameness and diversity, of sameness or similarity in sound, and diversity in signification. And it is easy to see, that such a mixture, where it appears uncommon and difficult, will be amusing, not only from the surprise which it occasions, but also from our admiration (a low species of admiration indeed) at the address of the person, who has acquired such a command of language. But if the mixture of sameness and diversity were in itself a cause of laughter, then every example of synonymous words, whether in the same, or in different languages, would also be a joke, since here too we have a mixture of sameness and diversity, sameness in the meaning and diversity in the sound.

But although the mixture of sameness and diversity will not in itself appear laughable even to those who are the most susceptible of

* Essays, 4to. p, 599.

ludicrous impressions, yet any man who is not occupied by serious considerations, or restrained by powerful emotions, will be tempted to smile, when he observes one person employing language seriously as the means of communicating his thoughts, while another uses it only as a plaything for the exercise of his ingenuity. Nor is it necessary, that we should have the seriousness of one person to compare with the playfulness of another. The contrast is still ludicrous enough when the instrument which we are either actually employing for the serious communication of thought, or which, at least, we know to be naturally appropriated for that important purpose, we contrive, by the by, to sport with for our amusement.

Here it may be said, that, according to this account, both rhyming and versification, and even every harmonious period, should be laughable, since language is in these cases employed not only for the serious communication of thought, but also for the comparatively trifling purpose of amusing the ear. Now the fact is, that on some occasions we are disposed to

laugh at these circumstances, and on other occasions we are affected in a very different manner; but neither case will be found inconsistent with the theory.

For, in the first place, those modifications of common speech, that render it more agreeable to the ear, strike us in very many instances rather as the natural properties of the language itself, than as adventitious ornaments laboured out by the art of the author or speaker. In the next place we know, that the mind is powerfully affected by melodious and regulated sounds, even when they are not, like language, the signs of ideas. Such is the case with instrumental music. We are even sensibly affected by sounds, which are destitute of melody, if only their intervals are properly regulated, as in the beating of a drum, or the tinkling of a cymbal. Accordingly, the intonations of voice, the harmony of periods, and that regular flow of numbers which constitutes verse, will not be felt as trifling, so long as their effect, whether solemn, or pathetic, or gay, or soothing, is favourable to the emotions

which the sentiments produce; and so long as they do not appear to be the result of too great labour and research. Even rhyme, which seems, when we consider it abstractedly, so egregiously trifling, is not only agreeable in itself, as we see from the delight that children and common people take in it; but also, as it serves, like the drum or cymbal, to mark more distinctly the regular flow of the numbers, contributes not a little to the effect of the versification.

But, on the other hand, if the music of the language does not correspond with the state of mind which is suitable to the occasion, it must, of course, appear not only a trifling, but an absurd contrivance, and in both of these views it will have a ludicrous effect. Thus we should certainly be tempted to smile, if the languishing tones and soothing numbers, which belong to supplication, pity, and the tender emotions, were employed in a discourse that was intended to enliven, or to encourage, or to command, or to instruct us in the arts and sciences.

In the next place, if the means employed to make the language agreeable be not such as we have been accustomed to, they will of course draw our attention to themselves, and must have the appearance, not of being the constituents, or ordinary properties, but only the ornaments of language. And, accordingly, unless they have a powerful command over our higher emotions, they will not fail to be ludicrous; until, from being accustomed to them, we do not feel them so distinct from the other properties of the language, and perhaps have formed associations of ideas which increase their serious influence. Thus, the tones of a foreigner sound at first uncouthly to our ear; and children and common people, who are not accustomed to check the expressions of their feelings, are always ready to laugh at him even in the pronunciation of his own language, and even when he is pronouncing it to the entire satisfaction of his own countrymen. So likewise any forms of verse, which are not usual in English, however fine their effects may be in the languages, in which we have been ac-

customed to find them, give a whimsical air to an English poem. This appears sufficiently from the unsuccessful attempts to introduce the Greek and Latin numbers into our versification, as in the Sapphic and Adonic stanzas of Dr. Watts on the Last Day, of which the following is a specimen :

> When the fierce North-wind with his airy forces
> Rears up the Baltic to a foaming fury,
> And the red lightning, like a storm of hail, comes
> Rushing amain down.

Rhyme is one of the most palpable contrivances for amusing the ear with the mere sound of words ; yet it is so agreeable a way of marking the measure of the verse, that when once we have been accustomed to it, we attend only to its pleasing effects, with little or no reflection on the frivolity of the contrivance. But where the rhyme happens to be of an unusual kind, the frivolity is forced on our notice; and we feel very sensibly, that such rhymes are fit only for ludicrous compositions.

In our language double rhymes are far less

frequent than single ones. Accordingly, double rhymes are very sparingly employed in serious poetry, as they have always somewhat of a ludicrous cast, except only when their effect on the ear is remarkably pleasing, and favourable to the proper emotions, while at the same time they result from the most natural expressions, without any appearance of research. For instance, when the first syllable is neither hard nor sonorous, but soft and easily articulated, the double rhyme is very soothing; and in passages which are designed to sooth, it will have a delightful effect, provided that the words are both proper and obvious: as in the following lines from Dryden's celebrated poem, entitled Alexander's Feast:

> Softly sweet in Lydian measures,
> Soon he sooth'd his soul to pleasures.
> War, he sung, is toil and trouble,
> Honour but an empty bubble,
> Never ending, still beginning,
> Fighting still, and still destroying:
> If the world be worth thy winning,
> Think, oh! think it worth enjoying.

But in other cases double rhymes in English poetry are fit for those passages only where the author means to be playful. It will be remarked also, that of such rhymes the most uncommon are the most ludicrous. In Hudibras we find many specimens:

> Cesar himself could never say
> He got two vict'ries in a day,
> As I have done, that can say, twice I
> In one day veni, vidi, vici.*
>
> Those wholesale critics that in coffee-
> Houses cry down all philosophy.†
>
> Alas! quoth Hudibras, what is't t' us,
> Whether 'twere said by Trismegistus?‡

Upon the whole, then, with regard to what we may call the music of language, there is nothing inconsistent with Dr. Hutcheson's theory; for the music of language is ludicrous only on those occasions, where it has the appearance either of absurdity or of trifling.

Of all the cases produced by Dr. Beattie

* Hudibras, part 1. canto 3.

† Ibid. part 2. canto 3. ‡ Ibid. ibid.

in opposition to the theory (if we except Butler's comparison of the morning dawn to a boiled lobster,* a case which speaks for itself), only three remain to be considered. One of them is an expedient, which, if it does not always "promote mirth," will have the effect of exciting curiosity and invention, and consequently may prove a very good amusement. The business is, that each person of a company, one after another, writes a line on the same page of paper; no one knows in the mean time, what the others have put down, as care is taken always to cover what has been already written; and lastly, the whole is read aloud to the impatient audience.† Of the same kind also is the device, which is mentioned, though with a different view, in another part of the essay,‡ when the facetious Papyrius Cursor "read the newspaper quite across the "page, without minding the space that dis- "tinguishes the columns, and so pretended to

* Beattie's Essays, 4to. p. 603. † Ibid. p. 611.
‡ Ibid. p, 597.

"light upon some very diverting combina-
"tions."

Now it is evident, that a curious enough contrast of seriousness and trifling may be exhibited by a person, who reads a string of incoherent sentences, with the gravity which would be suitable for a connected discourse. But it has not been shown, by example or argument, that such a collection of incoherent sentences will appear ludicrous in itself, when it neither exhibits nor suggests any contrast of dignity and meanness, or of seriousness and trifling. On the contrary, the observations which have been made on Sancho Panca's proverbs, are evidently applicable to the present case.

Let us now consider, whether the following account of Hudibras's dagger will afford an instance "of laughter arising from a group of "ideas or objects, wherein there is no discern-"ible opposition of meanness and dignity:"*

It could scrape trenchers, or chip bread;
Toast cheese or bacon, though it were

* Beattie's Essays, 4to. p. 598.

> To bait a mouse-trap, 'twould not care;
> 'Twould make clean shoes; or in the earth
> Set leeks and onions, and so forth.

Here Dr. Beattie says, that "the humour of "the passage cannot arise from the meanness "of the offices compared with the dignity "of the dagger; nor from any opposition "of dignity and meanness in the offices them-"selves, they being all equally mean; and "must therefore be owing to some other "peculiarity in the description." This peculiarity we afterwards find to be, that "the "offices ascribed to the dagger seem quite "heterogeneous; but we discover a bond of "connexion among them, when we are told, "that the same weapon could occasionally "perform them all."*

Yet surely it does not require half the talents displayed in Dr. Beattie's essay to point out certain very laughable contrasts, which are naturally, and indeed irresistibly suggested by these lines of Butler. For the dagger,

* Beattie's Essays, 4to. p. 603.

whose proper office every person will acknowledge to be an awful one, is here degraded into the most servile and low employments, and goes about them too with a familiarity and unconcern, which bespeak a character strangely debased below its original dignity ;

> though it were
> To bait a mouse-trap, 'twould not care !

Then, again, we cannot but be diverted both at the absurdity, the beggarly accoutrements, and the nastiness of the hero, who employs one and the same instrument, I do not say in the incongruous, but the incompatible offices of onion-dibble, cheese-toaster, shoe-scraper, trencher-scraper, and bread-chipper.

Such appear to be the considerations which raise our laughter in the present case. But there does not seem to be any thing ludicrous in the mere circumstance, that one and the same instrument is employed in performing different offices, however dissimilar these offices may be, if this diversity of employment neither exhibits nor suggests any con-

trast of dignity and meanness, nor implies any thing absurd or otherwise ridiculous in the employer. We laugh when Horace tells us, that the carpenter was uncertain whether he should make his block of wood a stool or a god; but unless we were diverted with the poor man's irresolution, which, as we have already observed, is naturally a laughable object, there would have been no joke, if he had only been uncertain whether to make it a stool or a sign-board, though these two things are completely incongruous. So likewise, although toasting cheese and cutting strings are employments of completely different kinds, yet no one would think it comical, if a common person, who had nothing more convenient at hand, should toast a bit of cheese on the point of a pocket-knife, which he kept for cutting strings or sticks. We might probably smile, however, if we saw him make this use of a pair of scissars, by recollecting their more cleanly and elegant occupations in the hands of the ladies. But if we saw him toast his cheese on the point of a sword or

bayonet, although either of these deadly weapons would be more convenient for the purpose than the pocket-knife, yet nothing could restrain our laughter but the fear of being run through the body.

We have now to close this long scrutiny with the only remaining case, that of the Enraged Musician, a well known picture of the celebrated Hogarth. "This extraordinary "group," Dr. Beattie says, "comprehends "not any mixture of meanness and dignity;" but he observes, that it "forms a very comi-"cal mixture of incongruity and relation;—of "incongruity, owing to the dissimilar employ-"ments and appearances of several persons, "and to the variety and dissonance of their "respective noises;—and of relation, owing "to their being all united in the same place, "and for the same purpose of tormenting the "poor fiddler."*

Now in this observation are pointed out circumstances, which suggest to every one who

* Beattie's Essays, 4to. p. 607.

looks at the picture, very curious contrasts of dignity and meanness. For, in the first place, by the appearance of the musician himself at the window, with his violin in his hand, vainly endeavouring to disperse his troublesome neighbours in the street, and shutting his ears in rage and misery, we have the charms of music brought into as direct and striking a comparison, as it was possible for a picture to accomplish, with the monstrous jarring of all the vilest noises, that could be collected from the lanes of London; the ill-tuned and most vociferous concert of the different cries, the grating sounds of knife-grinders, the peal of bells, indicated by the flag on St. Martin's steeple, the screams of children, the barking, snarling, and howling of dogs, the caterwauling of cats, and, for the counter-tenor of the infernal harmony, the shrill heart-piercing yells of scolding wenches. In fact, according to the observations which we have already had occasion to state and illustrate, this extraordinary concert would of itself be laughable, although the musician had not been introduced

For the clashing of the harsh and discordant noises would of itself suggest to any one, whose ears are assailed and tortured by it, the very different effect of sounds in that state of refinement to which we give the names of melody and harmony. But the appearance of the musician renders the contrast still more striking, and consequently makes a still more laughable group.

In another view, to which we are directed by the very title of the piece, the fiddler is extremely diverting, as he exhibits in his figure and deportment all the deformity and absurdity of extravagant rage. For he could not have been wrought up to a higher pitch of fury, if the people had deliberately assembled below his window for the express purpose of insulting and tormenting him; whereas, it is evident, that each of them is wholly engaged in his own occupation, without having any intention, and, indeed, without being conscious of their giving him the smallest offence. What is still more absurd, he vainly imagines, that the execrations which he is uttering with such

bitterness from the window, will make an impression amidst the din and confusion of the street; while, on the other hand, it is evident, that neither his execrations nor his furious looks, if they were perceived, would have the smallest effect to appease the storm, and that his unavailing screams are only adding another part, which might well have been spared, to a harmony already overloaded. To this we may add, that the complete unconcern and unconsciousness of the people with regard to the distress which they are occasioning, and the serenity, indeed, which appears in several of the countenances, renders still more glaring, by contrast, the foolish and impotent ferocity of the fiddler.

We have now finished the review which was proposed; and, if the observations which have been made in the course of it be just, it appears, not only that Dr. Hutcheson's theory remains unaffected by the examples which Dr. Beattie has opposed to it, but also that the theory, which resolves the ludicrous into mere incongruity, is not supported by facts, as several

cases have been produced, where incongruous objects are closely related to each other, but without assuming a ludicrous appearance.

It may still, however, be imagined, that although we cannot admit, in its full extent, the theory proposed by Dr. Gerard and his followers, yet Dr. Hutcheson's theory is too much limited, and that the ludicrous is produced by the connexion of objects or ideas, which are not merely incongruous, but of *opposite* kinds, or productive of *opposite* emotions. Thus, it may be said, we are apt to laugh when an ugly person is conversing with a beautiful one; or when any one is agitated between hope and fear; or when a man, whom we suppose to be glad in his heart, puts on a dismal countenance at the funeral, which brings him to the possession of an estate; nay, we should even think it somewhat droll, to see a person all in white beside another all in black.

But these examples, however plausible they may appear, are not conclusive. For although the beautiful person should be supposed to have less dignity than the ugly, still the beauty

of the one must render the ugliness of the other more conspicuous; and his ugliness must have a mean appearance, if not by comparison with the beauty of the particular person, who is near him, yet certainly by another comparison, which is implied in the very notion of ugliness; namely, a comparison with the figure, which he would have made, if he had not exhibited so glaring deviations from the more perfect form of his species: On the other hand, we may be satisfied, that our laughter does not proceed from the circumstance, that the qualities or appearances of the two persons are opposite; since the greatest giggler that ever lived is not diverted at seeing an old person in conversation with a young one.

With regard to the second case; a person agitated between hope and fear, or between any two motives, which impel in opposite directions, is no doubt apt to fall into a hesitation, or an inconsistency of conduct, which may be extremely ridiculous from its absurdity, or appearance of absurdity. But, who would think of laughing, merely because the probabi-

lity of a loss at cards was equal to the probability of a gain.

We laugh at the dismal countenance of an heir at his predecessor's funeral, when we suspect, or conceive, that it is only a *hum*, or hypocritical grimace, a species of the ludicrous which has been already considered. And the happier we imagine him to be in his heart, his grimace will appear the more ridiculous, at least till our indignation overcomes our propensity to laugh.

This, however, is no proof, that a contrast between sorrow and joy has in itself a ludicrous appearance. If it has, then we should laugh when a person, who is sorry for the illness or misfortune of one friend, expresses satisfaction at the recovery or prosperity of another. It is true, that we are tempted to smile at a person, who protests that he is excessively distressed at one event, and in the next breath declares that he is quite overjoyed at something else. But here we are diverted at the absurd extravagance of the language, where much is professed while little is felt; a *hum*, which is

the more palpable and absurd, as every one feels, that *excessive* joy and *excessive* sorrow cannot subsist together in the same mind, and cannot even succeed each other so rapidly, at least without a convulsive struggle, very different from the state of the man who is speaking quite at his ease. And all this is quite a different thing from the case of a person who tells us, without affectation, that some piece of good news gives him pleasure, while a piece of bad news gives him concern; a case, surely, which would never be quoted as a specimen of the ludicrous.

It may be said, however, that a merry countenance and a rueful visage form a ludicrous group. This will no doubt be the case, when each of these objects, or either of them, is ludicrous in itself. And when we are not restrained by sympathy or displeasure, we may be tempted to smile at the contrast between the levity of mirth and the seriousness of sorrow. It is to be remembered, too, that sorrow, borne with tolerable patience, has a dignity which commands our respect; whereas joy is ex-

tremely apt to degenerate more or less into the low friskiness of mirth. Hence the grimace of sorrow, like the strut of mock-majesty, will be always ridiculous. And hence there will very often be something whimsical in the conversation between a sad and a cheerful man. But joy, as well as sorrow, may be supported with calmness and dignity; and nobody sees any thing ludicrous in the contrast between sorrow and peace of mind.

These observations will be illustrated by the case which was mentioned of the black and white figures. For if we smile at seeing a person in white beside another in black, this cannot proceed from the mere contrast of the colours; otherwise we should think it droll to see a lady in a white gown with black ribands; a dress which, far from being ludicrous, is extremely elegant. We should, indeed, be diverted at a person, the upper part of whose apparel was all white, and the lower all black. But such an appearance would be very ugly; and our laughter at an ugly dress will not be thought inconsistent with Dr. Hutcheson's

theory, if we admit the principles which have been stated concerning deformity and absurdity.

It is evident, then, that our laughter at the black and white figures must be ascribed, not to the mere contrast of the colours, but to some ideas suggested by the appearance. Now, if the white figure be gayly and fancifully attired, and more especially if the countenance and demeanour favour the idea, it is the genius of mirth associated with the genius of mourning; and we may naturally be amused both at the absurdity of two such characters preferring each other's company, and also at the seriousness of the one contrasted with the levity of the other. But if the figure in white be simply, though elegantly dressed, and if the countenance, though young and happy, be at the same time serene, it is the emblem of peace or tranquil joy; and the two companions, whether our thoughts take a melancholy or cheerful course, will affect us with sentiments very different from laughter.

It appears, then, that in order to produce a

ludicrous effect, an author must fix our attention upon a contrast exhibited or suggested between somewhat that is comparatively great, severe, or important, on the one hand, and somewhat that is mean or trifling on the other: it being always understood, that the contrasted qualities must either reside in the same object, or, if they reside in different ones, yet that these objects must have some remarkable resemblance or relation to each other.

The propriety of this limitation will not be disputed. There is a sufficiently remarkable contrast, both in appearance and in station, between the porter of a ball-room and the company who pass him; the connexion, however, is too slight to occasion laughter. But if the porter should proceed to form a closer connexion, if he should be pleased to make himself one of the company, or to dance a minuet with a fine lady, the room would be instantly in a roar.

The necessity of some remarkable relation between the different objects, when the opposite qualities do not both reside in one, may be ac-

counted for in this manner; that otherwise the qualities are not so closely connected as to produce that vivid contrast, that rapid vibration between the opposite feelings, which appears to be essential to the ludicrous sentiment. It is to be observed, likewise, that the effect of the connexion to enliven the contrast arises not merely from the intimate association which it produces in our mind between the opposite ideas, but also from our surprise and wonder at the strange union of so incongruous qualities; and this surprise and wonder themselves constitute at the same time a very considerable part of our amusement.

But any particular case of this union may be so often presented, that, however strange it may be in itself, and however powerful its effect on a person to whom it is new, yet its impression upon those who have been accustomed to it will become too languid, to excite their attention to its oddity. We are much diverted by many of the old-fashioned dresses which have been preserved with so much care by some *judicious* painters in family pictures,

and we certainly could not refrain from laughing, if we saw an assembly of our modern beauties furbished out in the same taste. Yet our good fathers, who were accustomed to the appearance, had no difficulty to preserve their decorum when they entered the ball-room; and it would have required a man of some talents and humour, to represent the absurdity of their mantua-makers', and milliners', and hair-dressers' contrivances with sufficient vivacity to excite their ridicule.

Hence it is evident, that to excel in ludicrous composition, requires not only great vivacity in the contrast between dignity and meanness, but likewise somewhat unusual and unexpected in the combination of these qualities.

It is by no means implied, however, that the ludicrous circumstances daily exhibited in common life are on this account improper for such compositions. In fact, many things are daily to be seen in the appearance and conduct of mankind, which are not only fair and instructive objects of ridicule, but which may also be rendered entertaining in a very high degree. Nor

is this at all inconsistent with the principle which has just been mentioned. For although many things are so familiar as scarcely to engage our attention upon ordinary occasions, yet on this very account the ludicrous contrast which they suggest to an attentive and humorous observer, will be so much the more unusual and unexpected, when it is held up to our notice. Of all the fashionable dresses which have been successively introduced in our own days, there are few which did not in some respect appear more or less ridiculous upon their first introduction. This appearance, however, and sometimes also the remembrance of it, quickly goes off in consequence of familiarity. Accordingly, when the satirist points out in these familiar cases the care and contrivance with which even the most civilized of the human race incommode and deform themselves by the very means which they devise for convenience and ornament, we are entertained with the exhibition of absurdity, where we did not think of looking for it, nor were accustomed to remark it. And similar obser-

vations are applicable to some of the prevailing opinions of all classes of mankind. Pope, Swift, and Arbuthnot, not to mention several other men of genius, both in ancient and modern times, have shown, in a variety of instances, that very unusual and unexpected contrasts of the most ludicrous nature may be suggested in the representation of the most familiar objects and common events. And no author can arrive at eminence in ludicrous compositions, if he does not possess sufficient information and ingenuity, to combine such ideas of dignity and meanness as we do not frequently attend to, and would not readily expect to find confronting and allied to each other.

But even such combinations will lose much of their effect, and may often become positively disagreeable, when they are impertinently introduced; that is to say, when either by shocking our feelings, or distracting our attention, they disturb the particular impression which ought to be produced at the time. On the other hand, when they serve to enliven this impression, they appear to the greatest advantage, and

operate with their full effect. That vivacity of mind, which appears to be so essentially requisite before we can be sensible of the ludicrous, will in this case be greatly quickened by our admiration of the author's ingenuity, in promoting his objects by means which would not have readily occurred to ourselves, or which we should not have readily discovered how to apply to the purpose.

Thus Butler in Hudibras describes the dawn of the morning in the following manner:

> And now had Phœbus in the lap
> Of Thetis taken out his nap,
> When, like a lobster boil'd, the morn
> From black to red began to turn.

Here we are, in the first place, surprised by a very unexpected affinity which the author has discovered between the dawn of the morning and a boiled lobster. But we are also amused by the contrast between the meanness of this passage, and the elegance of those descriptions of Aurora in the celebrated epic poets, of which it is evidently intended as a burlesque imi-

tation. And thus we see, that the ludicrous combination of images, however wild it may appear, is aptly introduced to keep up the general idea of a mock-heroic poem, so that Hudibras may figure throughout as a companion to Æneas and Achilles.

Another very ludicrous combination is introduced for a more particular purpose in the following verses, which describe the ignominious chastisement inflicted on Whackum:

> Hudibras gave him a twitch,
> As quick as lightning, in the breech;
> Just in the place where honour's lodg'd,
> As wise philosophers have judg'd;
> Because a kick in that part more
> Hurts honour, than deep wounds before.

Here the poor fortune-teller's clerk appears in a very whimsical view, from the near relation which is discovered between his posteriors and his honour, inasmuch as the former are most unexpectedly, but most philosophically, demonstrated to be the seat of the latter. And this ludicrous demonstration appears with the utmost propriety in a work, the great design of which

is to expose the absurd logic and metaphysics which infected the philosophy and theology of those fanatical times.

The observations which have been made with regard to what is requisite for excellence in the ludicrous, may be shortly expressed in this manner, that the composition ought to be enlivened by wit. For wit consists in combining apparently incongruous objects, by means of unexpected relations, so as to render a composition or conversation more amusing, and yet so as to promote, or at least not to injure, the impression, which ought to be produced at the time.

These two limitations, although not mentioned in any of the general accounts of wit, which I have seen, appear to be necessary to the definition of the term in the sense in which it is now employed. The revolution of a planet and the fall of a stone are things which at first view appear extremely incongruous, but which Sir Isaac Newton combined most intimately by means of a very unexpected analogy. But although this combination might be considered

as an instance of *wit* according to the sense in which this word is employed by some of our older writers, yet the Principia certainly would not at present be quoted as a witty performance, inasmuch as the author has combined the incongruous objects, not to amuse his readers with an occasional sport of fancy, but to explain the system of the universe. And in general wit is distinguished from invention in the arts or sciences by the very different purposes, to which the combinations are applied. On the other hand, we do not consider as a man of wit every person, who may surprise or even divert us by odd combinations; but we reserve that name for him, who has the ingenuity to introduce them aptly, so as to incorporate easily with the conversation or composition. At the same time poetical fancy is distinguished from wit by this circumstance, that the poet, without being limited to strange and unthought of combinations, ought to admit none but such as either adorn his subject, or render it more affecting.

The distinction between the ludicrous and

the witty is also evident. For, in the first place, although, in either case, there is required an unexpected combination of incongruous ideas, it is implied in wit, that the combinations should not only be singularly unusual, but also both formed and applied with skill. And, in the second place, while wit may take its range through incongruous objects of every kind, the ludicrous character is found only in that remarkable class, where the contrasted ideas are those of dignity and meanness.

Nor is it in every combination of dignity and meanness, that the ludicrous character is *perceptible.* The objects will assume a different aspect, if, either from their own nature, or from the manner, in which they are represented, they awaken our serious emotions beyond a certain degree. Thus nobody laughs at Pope's account of that eminent person, whom he describes as

> The wisest, greatest, meanest of mankind.

Here our admiration and regret are so powerfully awakened, as to render us insensible of

the ludicrous. It is to be observed, however, that the ludicrous will become distinctly perceptible, if we only check these serious emotions, by lowering the tone in which the poet has announced this great character, and obscuring the splendour in which he had placed it:

> At ill-gotten riches, let simpletons gibe;
> Philosopher Bacon could pocket a bribe.

The effect of the serious emotions in controlling our laughter appears, at first sight, to degrade ludicrous compositions into a very low rank, as incapable of serving any useful purpose. But, for my own part, I cannot think it a matter of small utility, to afford an innocent amusement for enlivening the hours of solitude or weariness. These compositions, however, are frequently productive of higher effects, which not only render them more valuable, but also increase the vivacity of our amusement. For it cannot be denied, and various examples have been produced in the course of the foregoing investigation, that, at

least, they may serve to expose our slighter absurdities and follies. And even in this department, humble as some persons are apt to conceive it, services may be performed to society of no inconsiderable importance.

For in how many cases does it happen, that some failing, which is prevented by the better dispositions from influencing the conduct on serious occasions, impairs very sensibly the comfort of the person infected with it, abates the respect which is due to his virtues, and is the source of frequent vexation to his neighbours! How happy, for example, would it be, both for ourselves and our families, and all who are exposed to our company, if we could be cured of our wearisome loquacity, or our impertinent curiosity, or importunate officiousness, or impatience of contradiction, or self-conceit when we are courted, or peevishness when we are neglected! These, and various other foibles, even when they do not go so far as to assume the odious name of vices, yet not unfrequently produce, directly or indirectly, very poignant feelings, both to ourselves and

others. And, although each particular distress may be transient, and slight perhaps in itself, yet it may be so often repeated, as to amount to a grievous sum. It ought also to be remembered, that these trials of our patience generally occur in situations where we look for the enjoyment of life, or at least for relaxation from our cares; and from this cause, and also, independently of this cause, from the trivial nature of the circumstances themselves, we are not so apt to prepare or to exert ourselves for bearing them with composure. Thus no inconsiderable portion of the plagues of life would be removed, if the slighter absurdities and follies of mankind were corrected; and it will readily be admitted, that for this purpose ridicule is more effectual than serious admonition.

There is also another department, in which the ludicrous has been successfully employed for a very useful purpose; to expose those perversions of the understanding, which have led men to waste so much time and labour, and sometimes so much learning and ingenuity,

in frivolous, or misconceived, or unattainable pursuits. The memoirs and speculations of that multifarious philosopher, Martinus Scriblerus, are admirable specimens of this application of the ludicrous. And it is much to be regretted, that he does not revive to enlighten the world with his profound lucubrations on the discoveries of the present day: such as Animal Magnetism; or the Metallic Tractors; or the practicability of travelling under water, and of taking the command of the winds out of the hands of the witches;* or the probability that our posterity may see the plough obedient to the mind of the farmer, without the expensive intermediate agency of a ploughboy and horses;† or the *indefinite* perfectibility and *indefinite* longevity of man, to the utter confusion of lawyers, priests, and physicians.‡

But may not ridicule be employed with propriety and effect on still more important

* See Darwin's Botanic Garden, part I.

† See Godwin's Treatise on Political Justice.

‡ The late Marquis de Condorcet published an Essay on this subject. See also Godwin on Political Justice.

occasions? For, if the principles in the former part of the essay be just, there is nothing which prevents our laughter at the more serious errors and crimes of mankind, except our concern for their effects, or abhorrence of their depravity. Now, is it either impossible, or is it, in every case, improper for an author, to throw the graver parts of his subject so much into the back-ground of his picture, and to touch them so slightly, while, at the same time, he places the *absurdity* of folly and guilt in so glaring a light, that we shall be forced to laugh at those very objects, which, under a different management, would produce the most serious emotions?

There can be no doubt, that the thing is possible, for it has often been done; nor does there appear any reason to prohibit, however proper it may be to regulate, this *additional* method of discountenancing error and vice. Argument and admonition, restraint and punishment, are, indeed, the most direct remedies: but restraint and punishment, in a thousand cases, it is not in human power

to inflict; and, at any rate, all gentle means should be employed to prevent, as far as possible, the necessity of these harsher corrections. And many persons are terrified by ridicule, who lend a deaf ear to argument; nor is it less difficult to bear the laughter, than the reproaches of the world. Few serious discourses are so well calculated as the Voyage to Lilliput, for reminding us how often the most contemptible trifles are wrought up by human folly into objects of the most serious importance; and for checking that low pride and selfish ambition, which are so apt to corrupt the powerful, and which, in all nations, and under all forms of government, have sometimes led them to the most atrocious as well as the vilest crimes. Nor will it be denied, that the admirable satire of Hudibras contributed greatly to discredit that mixture of hypocrisy and fanaticism, of worldly ambition and spiritual pride, which, in those days, perverted the purest and most pacific religion into an engine of cruel and unhallowed policy; which, *after* the parliament had it fairly in their

offer and in their power to establish the most effectual restraints against the abuse of the royal prerogative, spread the horrors of civil war over a happy land, and reared a military despotism on the ruins of the throne. This was the millennium of the puritanical saints. But, if Butler had lived in our days, he would have found a subject still more worthy of his powers, in the millennium of the new-fangled philosophers, the revolution of France, which began in rebellion to Lewis the sixteenth, and ended in submission to General Bonaparte; that strangest of all strange events, where we have seen jumbled in one monstrous group the most remorseless villains, and the most self-conceited dupes, the most hellish atrocities, and the most nonsensical buffooneries, the deepest of all tragedies, and the absurdest of all farces.

This extensive and most important department of the ludicrous, in which the absurdities of mankind are exposed to ridicule, is distinguished in our language by the name of the *humorous.* In other departments, the ludicrous is only a trifling amusement, which soon

grows insipid; but humour possesses a singular vivacity and interest from the exhibition of our fellow-creatures. It acquires, too, a great additional charm, when it is rendered subservient to useful purposes; and we have just seen, what has been also exemplified in the former part of the essay, that it has naturally a tendency to promote happiness and virtue. For every thing, even in the intellectual or moral character, which is inconsistent with what should be looked for in a rational and accountable being, is naturally ridiculous, though our laughter may be restrained by more powerful emotions. And those authors perform a very important service to society, who make men feel, that he, who cherishes even the slighter and more pardonable follies and foibles, will expose himself to the ridicule of his fellow-creatures; and that he, who perseveres in serious guilt, will become the object of their alternate abhorrence and derision.

When so ample and diversified a field is open to ludicrous writers, in which they may deserve the gratitude, and promote the best interests of

mankind, it is to be lamented, that some of them have perverted their talents to the most improper purposes. There is, in particular, one abuse, against which we ought always to be on our guard. It is similar to what is known in painting by the name of caricature; where each feature of the picture resembles the corresponding feature of the original, but where so strange a disproportion between the features is introduced into the picture, as to divert us with its deformity, or with the absurdity which it expresses. In the same manner, any particular disposition, however respectable or amiable in itself, may yet be represented in so great excess, or so unseasonably displayed, that it shall appear extremely absurd. And the reader, not attending to the real state of the matter, that he is laughing at the excess, or at the unseasonable display of the good disposition, not at the disposition itself, may be led to regard even virtue as ridiculous. It is thus that economy, temperance, prudence, piety, patriotism, and disinterestedness, are so much laughed out of countenance among thoughtless

or half-thinking men, at different periods of their life.

We have still to mention another abuse, which consists in giving a laughable appearance to objects of real dignity, worth, or importance, by grouping them with such as are mean or contemptible. Thus it is not uncommon with buffoons, who are incapable of any higher species of drollery, to employ on the gravest subjects the most vulgar expressions, or such as either directly or indirectly suggest low and perhaps filthy ideas; endeavouring by this means to degrade in our imagination those things which are in themselves the most affecting and sublime. In like manner, it is easy, and is too often practised, to raise a laugh against the worthiest character. For this purpose any of his weaknesses (and who is without weaknesses both moral and intellectual?), or any unseemly circumstance in his situation or appearance, is presented in the most glaring light, while, at the same time, his real worth is not brought forward in its full splendour to overpower the ludicrous effect.

In fact, in the present condition of our fallen nature, and in this strange world, where we are appointed to pass the first sixty or seventy years of our existence, the great and the little, the heavenly and the earthly, the angel and the reptile, are so variously connected, and blended, and united, that a buffoon can find no difficulty to expose whatever is most important and sacred to the laughter of the unprincipled or giddy. Nothing more is required than presumption enough to sport with his subject; that is to say, to touch slightly on those objects, which would otherwise produce too serious impressions, while he expatiates on the low or despicable ideas, with which they may happen to be associated. It is obvious, for example, how many whimsical representations any person, who had impiety enough, might easily give of the superintending care of Heaven for so pitiful an animal as man, who is engaged by the necessities of his nature in so many paltry concerns: or how oddly he may represent the presumption of such a feeble, shivering, trifling creature, in claiming kindred with the angels,

and hoping one day to join their society. It is easy to conceive, that persons, who have the firmest belief in a future state, may yet be tempted to laugh, when the drunken fellow in the play comes across their thoughts, who called out to his comrades, as they were threatening to put to death a poor knight of the needle, to stop a little before they made the tailor immortal.

But it is highly improper to sport with those important and awful concerns; or even to accustom ourselves to ridicule the present condition of man. And Swift ought not to escape without severe reprehension, who, with a hard heart and sacrilegious hand, tore away the veil, with which the modest pride and the good sense of cultivated nations cover the nakedness of the filthy despicable *yahoo*; that decent veil, which enables us to contemplate with greater complacency and respect, and to cultivate with greater ardour, the graces, the talents, and the virtues of our nature.

But although we ought to detest those compositions, where the author endeavours to cor-

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